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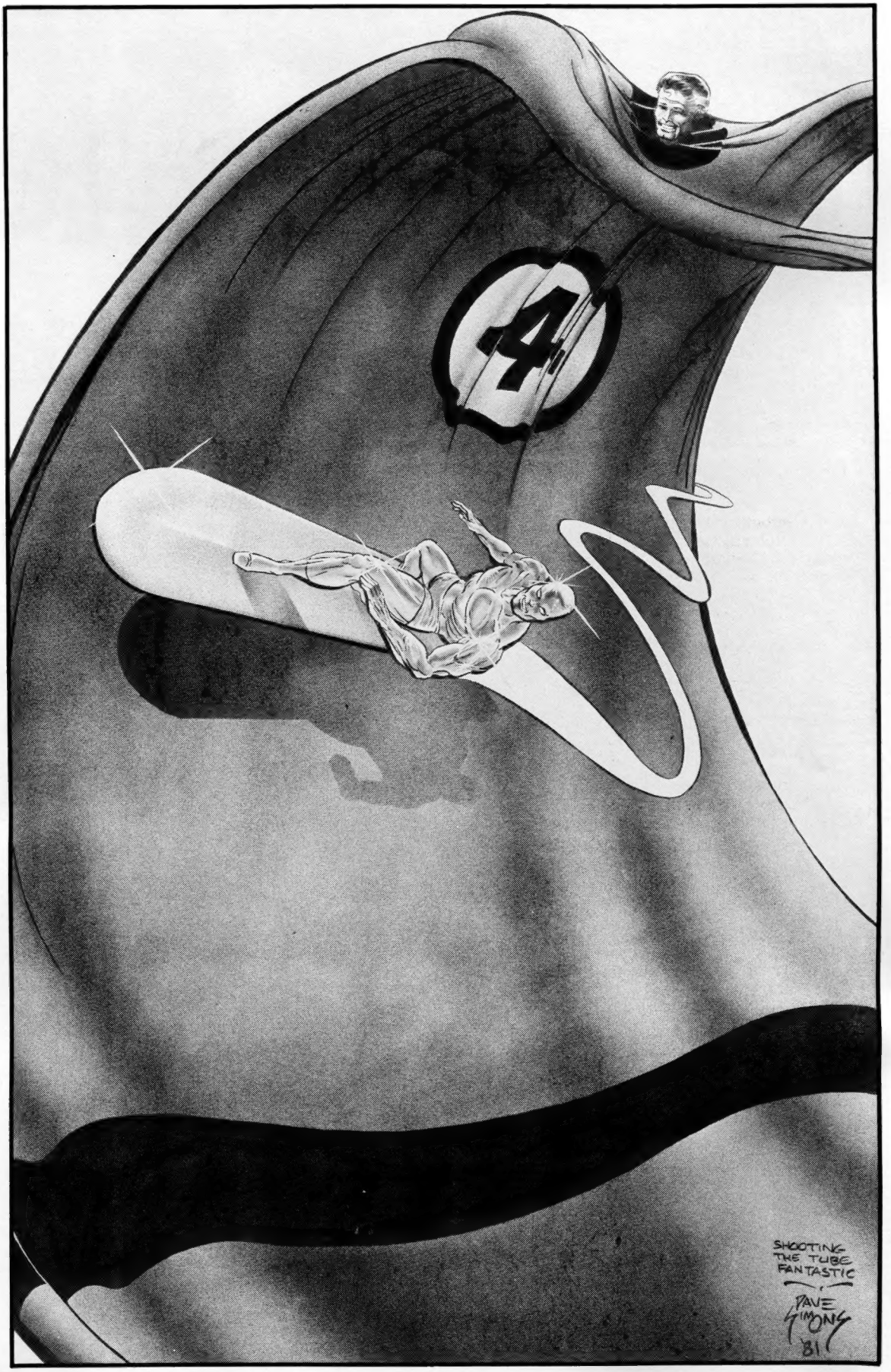
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The Fantastic Four® Chronicles

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Front cover by **John Byrne**
Inside front cover by **Dave Simons**
Centerspread by **John Byrne**
(The back cover by George Perez as advertised was unavailable at press time. We hope you enjoy the George Perez drawing in "Twenty Years With the World's Greatest Comic Magazine," however.)

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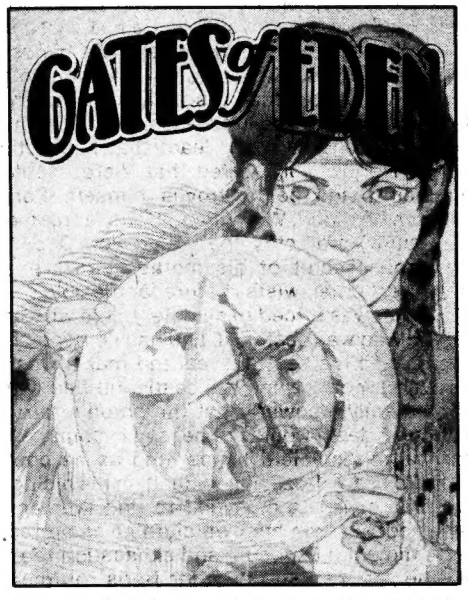

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Twenty Years With The World's Greatest Super-Team

By J.A. Fludd

The saga of the Fantastic Four begins with two different men in two different parts of the world: Reed Richards in America, and Victor Von Doom in a tiny Balkan country called Latveria. First, there's Reed . . .

There is some evidence to support the idea that Reed comes from a wealthy background. Some of it is provided by the FF's creators, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, in *Fantastic Four* 11. In an offbeat story called "A Visit With the Fantastic Four," this is the way Reed describes his relationship with his best friend, Ben Grimm, when they were in college: "I was a millionaire's son, and he was from the wrong side of the tracks, but I cheered louder than anyone when he made All-American." That obscure piece of dialogue, buried in one of the FF's earliest stories, has probably been forgotten by all but the most knowledgeable and erudite scholars of Marvel history. However, in writer/illustrator John Byrne's recent 20th anniversary FF story, "Terror in a Tiny Town," another line occurs that might possibly corroborate the one in issue 11.

Fantastic Four 236, the 20th anniversary issue, contains a number of dream/flashback sequences from *FF* 11. In one of them, Sue Storm, the Invisible Girl-to-be, is trying to persuade test pilot Ben to fly Reed's experimental rocket into space. She urges him to do so on the grounds that "Reed's private fortune is almost exhausted." (Curiously, this line does not occur in Stan Lee's original text from *FF* 1.)

However, in 20 years of Fantastic Four history, we have never seen even one member of Reed's family, wealthy or otherwise. Further, no mention has been made of any relatives outside the immediate family. Any of these people, if they exist, might have some sort of claim on this rather nebulous fortune. On the other hand, we might have reason to believe that Reed's parents died and left the fortune solely to him. It would simplify matters a bit, at any rate. And after the money ran out (the last of it being spent on that fateful space flight), we have strong evidence saying that Reed began to rely on royalties from patents on his inventions to provide him with liquid capital. In fact, in *FF* 9, Lee and Kirby have him losing the patent money when he uses it to make some disastrous gambles in the stock market. As a result, the Fantastic Four goes bankrupt and the team is evicted from its headquarters. It appears that salvation is at hand when a Hollywood film studio offers our heroes a million dollars for starring in a motion picture, but as fate would have it, the studio is owned by the Sub-Mariner, with whom the FF are engaged in a running feud (which ran for a good part of the series' early history). Eventually, though, all is put right, the film is released, and the Fantastic Four are once again "in the black."

Another fascinating episode takes place in *The Amazing Spider-Man* 1. Here, young Spider-Man mistakenly thinks he can make "top salary" as a member of the Fantastic Four. He learns to his chagrin, that "any profit we make goes into scientific research"—and, presumably, towards paying the FF's rent and expenses and maintaining their equipment. In short, Spider-Man had no hope of getting rich as the Fantastic Four's fifth wheel.

More than a decade later, in *Fantastic Four* 160, author Roy Thomas decides to let the FF turn a bigger profit by establishing the team as a corporation. The character of "Fantastic Four, Incorporated" stipulates that there must at all times be "four super-powered members"—the Fantastic Four themselves—with Reed as a majority stockholder. (Also see issues 168-170, in which the Thing reverts to Ben Grimm, thereby losing his powers, necessitating that Reed bring in Power Man, Hero for Hire, as a replacement to satisfy the charter.)

Through most of their history, though, money has not been one of the Fantastic Four's greatest worries. They have almost never lacked for funds or equipment and have seldom had trouble living the lives of middle- to upper-middle-class super-heroes.

Then there is Victor Von Doom . . .

It is somehow ironic that the background of the greatest arch-fiend ever to appear in a comic book is better documented than those of his super-hero enemies. Victor Von Doom is of very modest origins, the son of Werner Von Doom, a gypsy doctor, and his wife Cynthia, a sorceress. Victor's father was a gentle, kindly man, He lived a simple life and cared for others. Even after Cynthia met her fate at the hands of superstitious villagers, Werner did not succumb to anger and vindictiveness. In fact, his greatest concern was that his young son (who was an infant when his mother was slain) should never learn that his mother was a witch. He probably feared that Victor would take up witchcraft and be destroyed himself. For most of Victor's boyhood, Werner and Boris (a trusted friend of the family) protected the young Von Doom from the sorcerous secret of his mother. However, fate had some very cruel twists in store for the boy.

Werner was forced to minister to the wife of the local baron, who was deathly ill and had no hope of recovery. Werner did his best but realized that it was not good enough. Upon leaving the castle, he fled with his son immediately, knowing that the baron's retribution for his wife's death would not be long in coming. He eluded the baron's soldiers for as long as he could until a blizzard nearly froze him to death in his hiding place.

Boris, however, managed to find Werner, who had wrapped Victor in his own clothing to protect the boy from the cold. Exposure and exhaustion took their toll on the old man shortly after Boris returned the Von Dooms to camp. Werner's dying words were, "You must protect . . ." Victor, now smoldering with hatred, swore to his father that no one would have to protect him, and that he would become strong and powerful and avenge his father's death. But Boris knew that the *world* had to be protected—from *Victor*.

Shortly thereafter, Victor found Cynthia's strongbox among Werner's personal effects—a box containing all the mystical and scientific secrets that Werner and Boris had sought to hide from the boy. Once his mother's arcane estate passed into the boy's hands, there was no stopping Victor Von Doom. At first, he was satisfied to use his new knowledge to swindle and bedevil whoever crossed his path, but as the entire countryside took up arms against him, Victor's machinations began to take a more ominous turn. Suddenly, lifelike androids and temperature-control bombs were being hurled against Von Doom's foes. It was not long before Victor's reputation made him something of a legend—which was why the Dean of Science at Empire State University appeared at the gypsy camp one day, with the offer of a scholarship. Intrigued with the idea of having access to western technology, Victor

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accepted. Upon his arrival at ESU, Victor's path crossed for the first time with another of the science department's freshmen: Reed Richards.

Richards and Von Doom did not make a favorable impression on each other. Reed found Victor too caught up in his sense of superiority to the rest of the world to be friendly with anyone. Victor thought Reed was an incompetent fool. They very quickly went their separate ways. Reed shared a room with Ben Grimm, "the touchdown king," and Victor kept to himself, practicing witchcraft and performing "bizarre and dangerous experiments." These included inquiries into "matter transmutation and dimension warps." His most ambitious effort was an instrument with which he intended to "contact the nether world," but his plans for the machine contained a few crucial miscalculations. Reed tried to warn Victor that he was a few decimals off in a few important places, but the fiercely proud Von Doom refused to listen. As a result, the trans-dimentional helmet blew up in his face, reducing it to a mass of scar tissue, grotesque and gruesome beyond description. This totally shattered the young genius's pride. Vowing that no one would see his visage again, he fled to a remote, snow-covered mountain range (the Himalayas?) where an unknown order of monks took him in. They nursed the half-frozen exile back to health, taught him more arcane secrets, and forged him a suit of armor that seemed to radiate evil from the moment he put it on. They hid his mutilated face behind a mask of iron, and in that moment, he was transformed into the most dangrous man on the face of the Earth: *Doctor Doom*.

After this rather awesome transformation, Dr. Doom wasted no time returning to Latveria and seizing power for himself, changing his homeland into an absolute monarchy which he ruled with equal parts of benevolence and ruthlessness. Under Doom's cruelly efficient regime, Latveria rose to wealth and prosperity and such perfect order as its citizens had never imagined, while maintaining the relative obscurity of a "postage-stamp" country. The price he demanded of his cowed populace was their total deference to his will; their respectful silence when he appeared among them . . . and their happiness. The penalty for not at least maintaining the appearance of happiness in Latveria was execution. Doom's laws were strictly enforced by his robot soldiers. Energy weapons were placed at the perimeters of the country to thwart escape attempts by citizens who did not accept Doom's "charity." In his own words: "How ungrateful are those who will not accept the rule of Dr. Doom. Do I not give them shelter . . . provide them with food? And all that I ask is total, blind obedience!" (See *Fantastic Four* 84-87. The authoritative origin of Dr. Doom as described here, appears in the *Fantastic Four Annual* 2, 1964.)

Part of Doom's equipment is a ring bearing the royal seal of Latveria (see *Fantastic Four Annual* 2 and *Iron Man* 150.) It is exposed by a sliding hatch in one of the Doctor's metal gauntlets and fires an electronic beam that loosens the mask and allows him to remove it whenever he wishes. (It would be a bit ironic if the ring operated on the same principle as the belt-buckle solenoids that the Fantastic Four themselves use to activate the elevator to their skyscraper headquarters, a device established in *FF* 6.) When the monks first gave Doom his armor, they had him wear the ring over his gauntlet and used a coating of "special herbs" to camouflage it. Doom made his own improvement later. Curiously, though, *The Mighty Thor* 182 has the Doctor loosening and removing the mask by working a number of built-in locks and latches. (Another case of Stan Lee contradicting his own creations.)

Once he had established himself in Latveria, the Doctor immediately set to work on his other goals: the destruction of the Fantastic Four and the conquest of the world. His first campaign (*FF*5) involved luring the Fantastic Four to his castle in the Adirondack Mountains (admittedly, an unlikely location) and forcing them to fetch the treasure of Blackbeard the Pirate via a time machine Doom has created. Doom, having no need of mere wealth, was looking for certain gems that had been given magical properties by Merlin, the magician of Arthurian legend. Of course, the Doctor was thwarted, and the time machine went on to become the very root of popular fiction's most perplexing time paradox.

By the time Dr. Doom first menaced the Fantasic Four, Reed Richards was already unofficially engaged to Sue Storm, the girl who had lived next door to him when they were children and had grown up to be his teammate as the Invisible Girl. Sue is the only woman Reed has ever loved, and when he and Ben were drafted into World War II, his thoughts turned to her constantly. In the Army, Reed worked underground for the OSS, helping Allied prisoners escape from the Nazis. Ben, in the meantime, served with the Marines as a fighter pilot. During the war, Reed's hair turned prematurely white at the temples. (See *FF* 11 and *Fantastic Four Annual* 1, 1963, "Questions and Answers About the Fantastic Four.")

When he and Ben were discharged, Reed went into scientific research for himself. In the 1950s and early '60s, America was caught up in an anti-Communist mentality. As a result, Reed was obsessed with achieving manned space flight before the Russians did. Thus, he hastily designed and built an experimental rocket ship with the intent of having Ben fly it for him. Perhaps because of his diminishing budget, he also failed to provide the craft with adequate shielding from dangerous radiation in outer space. Only Sue's implication of cowardice finally persuaded Ben to fly the ship. It was a capitulation that Ben would bitterly regret for the rest of his life.

In recalling the origin of the Fantastic Four, it is entirely valid to ask why Reed allowed Sue and her 16-year-old brother Johnny to accompany him and Ben on their potentially dangerous space flight. This is an especially good question in light of the overprotectiveness with which Reed has treated Sue on many occasions in the Fantastic Four's history. This, however, is a plot discrepancy that we simply have to tolerate. Without it, the FF's origin and the beginning of Marvel's contemporary mythos would doubtless be a rather complicated affair.

The rocket achieved escape velocity and penetrated the Earth's upper atmosphere with no trouble at all . . . and then it approached the fateful belt of cosmic rays in space. Reed was proud of his accomplishment ("We had to do it! We had to be the first!"), but Ben remained apprehensive about the affects of the strange energy particles that passed in torrents through the rocket's flimsy shielding. In a matter of moments, the space travelers were overcome by the cosmic storm. Johnny felt a near-unbearable burning sensation, and worst of all, Ben found himself becoming incredibly heavier—too heavy to move a muscle, let alone control the ship. The group's unscathed survival of their crash landing was miraculous, to say the least—but they would discover in short order that each of them had undergone a radical change.

Sue gained the power to become invisible; Reed discovered that he could stretch his limbs to many times their normal length; Johnny found himself bursting into flame and flying through the air; and Ben,

who had protested the entire mission, was cursed with the greatest and most terrible change: a transformation into a massive, unbelievably misshapen monster with the strength of thousands of men. Realizing that they had become "something more than merely human," they took a mutual vow to use their powers only for the aid and protection of those less powerful than they. With that, they christened themselves the *Fantastic Four.*

The Fantastic Four originally made their headquarters in Central City, California (see issue 1 and *The Incredible Hulk* 235.) By issue 3, they had donned their distinctive costumes and moved to their familiar headquarters in midtown Manhattan's 40-story Baxter Building.

The Baxter Building was constructed in 1961 by millionaire industrialist Jackson Leigh Baxter (see issue 234). The Fantastic Four occupy the top five floors. Their headquarters is accessible only by means of a private elevator activated by electronic beams fired from special solenoid devices. Each of the FF carries one of these in his or her belt buckle. Their doorman, a gentleman by the name of O'Hoolihan (Johnny Storm calls him "O'Hoolie") also has one. (O'Hoolihan appears in issues 79, 168, and 191.) The FF's mailman, recently retired, was a character by the name of Willie Lumpkin, who, like several other characters, was transplanted to the contemporary Marvel Universe from the Golden Age. His first *Fantastic Four* appearance was in issue 11.

Among the FF's other special equipment are two models of the Fantasti-Car (also spelled "Fantasticar"—see issues 3 and 12), an airjet cycle (issue 45), a passenger missile, an orbital "pogo plane," and a Fantasti-Copter.

FF headquarters also contains the FF's living spaces, labs and machine shops, computer rooms, rocket silo and launch pad, TV monitors, TV and radio studios, observatory, and Negative Zone chamber. (The up-to-date diagram of Fantastic Four headquarters appears in issue 201.)

The Cast of the Fantastic Four

One way to judge a comic book is by the characters and concepts that it presents to its audience. This is an area in which the *Fantastic Four* has made an indelible mark on the history of comics. There are more significant characters, classic stories, trend-setting ideas, and other comic book "firsts" associated with the *Fantastic Four* than with any other comic magazine in existence. The series is steeped in 20 years of tradition. Its creators, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, hold an unbroken record for most consecutive issues of a comic magazine produced by the same writer and artist. Together, they guided their characters through 102 issues and six annuals. Here we find a series that changed the face of comics forever, putting an end to two-dimensional characters and introducing people who possessed not only great powers, but also loves and hatreds, pains and ambitions, joys and sorrows, virtues and vices. The Fantastic Four do not lead double lives. They do not conceal their identities. The world in which they live is part of a richly detailed fictional Universe, but the city of New York in which their adventures take place is a reflection of the real thing.

In the Fantastic Four we find that first super-hero engagement, wedding, childbirth, and near-divorce. We find a handicapped person—the Thing's girlfriend—portrayed with poignance, intelligence, and dignity. And we see the very foundations of an entire comic book cosmos, with the first appearances of the Skrulls, the Kree, the Silver Surfer, Doctor Doom, Galactus, the Inhumans and their Great Refuge, the Negative Zone, the Black Panther, his kingdom of Wakanda and the science-fictional metal vibranium, and the Watcher. It was also in the Fantastic Four that the Sub-Mariner and the kingdom of Atlantis were revived from Timely Comics, the first generation of Marvel. (The Human Torch found him stricken with amnesia in a bowery flophouse in issue 4.)

These, then, are some of popular fiction's most famous and remarkable characters . . .

Reed Richards, Mister Fantastic

"There is so much yet to learn, so much to see, and marvel at . . . but there will be others . . . those who come after me . . . and they will unlock the secrets of the cosmos, one by one . . . for the mind of man is the greatest key in the world . . . which may one day open the door to . . . immortality!!!

"And each of us, in his own way, does what he can for those who will follow. That is the only true legacy we can leave to those we love . . . that we have made the world little better than we found it."

That soliloquy, one of the best pieces of writing in Stan Lee's career, was spoken by Reed Richards *en route* to "certain doom" in the Negative Zone (issue 62). Reed, as one can easily tell, has a profound passion for knowledge. His natural genius embraces the fields of physics, chemistry and biology, and his knowledge and skill in computer science are not inconsiderable, either. Among his discoveries is the means to create "unstable molecules." These molecules, when processed into fabric or leather-like materials, conform to physical changes in the bodies wearing the garments. The Fantastic Four's costumes are made of unstable molecules, so that Mister Fantastic's costume stretches with him, Invisible Girl's outfit becomes invisible when she does, and the Human Torch never incinerates his uniform. (See *FF Annual* 1.) Inspired by the powers of the Watcher, Galactus, and the Silver Surfer, Reed also found a way to penetrate into subspace, which paved the way for his discovery of the Negative Zone. (See issue 51. There is also evidence that he was working on the problem as early as issue 37, in which he uses a "space-time warp" to transport the FF to the Andromeda Galaxy.) Largely by virtue of his intellect, Reed has always been the leader of the Fantastic Four.

Mister Fantastic's basic power is the ability to stretch. He can elongate his limbs several hundred yards apiece. When he "stilts" his legs, he can take half-mile strides. He can make a sail, a parachute, or a trampoline of his torso. His powers also work in "reverse," enabling him to compress his body into a shock-absorbent ball which makes a powerful projectile when thrown with the strength of, say, the Thing. If he is imprisoned, he can leak through a crack in a wall or under a door.

Reed's personality at times approaches that of an absent-minded professor. According to John Byrne in *Amazing Heroes* 1, he is extremely knowledgeable, but at times too caught up in planning and studying to take quick actions. (This is the way Byrne is currently writing the character.) In additon, he has a massive vocabulary and an obvious penchant for making speeches—a tendency that often grates on his less-than-intellectual friend Ben Grimm.

Reed's love for his wife, Susan, and his son, Franklin, has at times turned to overprotectiveness. For example, issue 67 has him refusing to allow Sue to accompany the rest of the team to the Beehive to rescue Alicia, the Thing's girlfriend. In issue 71, Reed thinks that the Thing (who has just recovered from being brainwashed by the Thinker) is menacing Sue, and

goes berserk against him. This time, his concern is entirely justified, as Sue is pregnant with Franklin, and once the Thinker has been defeated, he leaves the team and takes his wife with him. After Franklin was born, Reed continued this tendency towards trying to exclude Sue from the FF's missions on the grounds that she was "the mother of his child." In time, Sue came to resent this attitude, and in issue 129, after a battle in which Franklin was threatened by the Frightful Four, Sue decided she had had enough of not being treated as an equal. She took her child and left both the team and her husband.

But the worst was yet to come. In issues 140 and 141, Sue, Franklin, and Agatha Harkness (a witch who was the boy's governess) were kidnapped into the Negative Zone by the alien Annihilus, whose lust for power and immortality had led him to covet Franklin's slowly developing powers. The boy proved to be so dangerously powerful that Reed was forced to shut down his mind turning him into a vegetable, before he destroyed the world. Angry and heartbroken, Sue filed for divorce with the intent of marrying the Sub-Mariner, who had been Reed's rival for her affection from issue 4 to issue 27. Ironically, the Sub-Mariner, who had long since put aside his differences with the FF, was actually working with the FF's friends, the Inhumans, to restore the Richard's marriage. (See issues 147-149.)

Reed is very proud of all his abilities and probably sees himself as being absolutely essential to the Fantastic Four. Small wonder, then, that the greatest crisis in his life (other than his marital problems) came when his powers entered a state of attrition. In issue 157, he sorely taxed himself by oozing through a wall in Doctor Doom's castle. By issue 178—right in the middle of another attack by the Frightful Four—he had totally lost his elasticity. Shorn of his powers, he eventually threw in the towel. In issue 188, he stepped down as leader of the team, and the Fantastic Four split up in short order. Only the manipulations of Dr. Doom reunited the FF. Part of this most elaborate scheme of the deadly Doctor's career involved another space flight in which the erstwhile Mr. Fantastic re-exposed himself to the cosmic rays, reactivating his powers. The complete story of the FF's separation and their reunion at the mercy of their deadliest foe is in issues 192 to 200.

Susan Storm Richards, the Invisible Girl

"Even my life is less dear to me than loyalty to those who trust me!" These words of defiance were spoken by Sue Richards, the Invisible Girl, as she was menaced by the Klaw, the Master of Sound, in issue 56. Klaw wanted to know the whereabouts of his nemesis and the FF's friend, the Black Panther, and Sue refused to tell him. Sue has often been thought to be the "shrinking violet" of the super-heroine set. Some fans have believed Sue to be weak, overly submissive, and incapable of pulling her own weight. This is an issue that Stan Lee and Jack Kirby confronted head-on in issue 11, "A Visit With the Fantastic Four."

This story has Sue feeling despondent over some rather unflattering comments in the FF's fan mail: "A number of readers have said that I don't contribute enough to you . . . [that] you'd be better off without me. And perhaps they're . . . right!" (In an interesting twist of fictional reality, Marvel Comics exists within the Marvel Universe itself and has been authorized by the Fantastic Four to publish a comic book about them. See issue 10.) Reed and Ben find this upsetting, to say the least: "If we printed [Abraham] Lincoln's life in our mag, some wise guy would probably write in and ask why we don't leave his mother out of the story because she doesn't do enough!" . . . "When it comes to bravery and courage, Sue Storm takes a back seat to nobody!" . . . "If you readers wanna see women fightin' all the time, then go see the lady wrestlers!"

Threatened by Dr. Doom, pursued by Klaw, menaced by the Thinker's android, Sue has proven herself entirely capable of handling them all and many more. Unlike her teammates, she did not gain all of her powers at the same time. For almost the first two years of the FF's history, the Invisible Girl was just that: a brave, beautiful young woman with the power to make herself invisible. In issue 22—perhaps in the interest of resolving the Invisible Girl question once and for all—Lee and Kirby amended her powers so that she could make other people and objects invisible as well. Most significantly, they enabled her to project invisible energy from her mind and use it to create a force field with which to protect herself and her teammates. She has found other uses for her force field as well. She can bombard her foes with particles or spheres of invisible energy. She can shape the force field into a "slide" to propel herself through the air, or a "column" to lift herself out of harm's way.

Very little has been revealed of the days when the Richardses and the Storms were neighbors. However, the tragic story of Sue and Johnny's parents, Franklin and Mary Storm, was detailed in the classic *FF* 32.

Mary Storm died as a result of an automobile accident.

She was critically injured and her husband, a surgeon, failed to save her. Consumed with feelings of guilt and inadequacy, Dr. Storm took to drinking and gambling. He lost all of his money and could not repay his loan shark—who was shot with his own gun in a scuffle with Dr. Storm. Sue and Johnny's father, still crushed by loss of self-esteem, refused to defend himself at the trial and received the maximum life sentence. Meanwhile, his son and daughter kept the house in Glenville, New York. In the early days of the FF, they were still living there and commuting to the Baxter Building.

Years later, Franklin Storm was abducted from his jail cell by the Skrulls, a race of warlike alien shape-changers from the Andromeda Galaxy. (Their hostilities towards the Fantastic Four date back to issue 2.) A powerful Skrull agent, the Super-Skrull (who possesses all the same powers as the FF themselves) took Dr. Storm's physical appearance and went on a rampage as the Invincible Man. Not knowing who the Invincible Man really was, the FF pulled their punches with him until Reed discovered the Super-Skrull's deception. Franklin Storm was returned to Earth—with a force-beam weapon strapped to his chest. Rather than let the explosive energy harm the FF, Storm threw himself face-down to the floor and took the brunt of the blast himself. He sacrificed himself for his children. (Franklin Storm's death was engineered by a Skrull named Warlord Morrat, who received his just desserts in issue 37.)

Reed Richards is not the only Marvel character whose heart Sue has stolen. In the FF's very earliest adventures, the Thing was infatuated with her. (In issue 3 he agonizes to Reed: "I want Sue to look at me the way she looks at you!") And the romantic triangle formed Sue, Reed, and Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, held the FF's readers' rapt attention for more than two years. Issue 27, for example, has Sue playing one of her "damsel in distress" roles as Namor actually kidnaps her to Atlantis, intending to hold her there until he has had a chance to win her love. Of course, this plan produced exactly the opposite effect, and it was then that Sue realized that Reed was truly the man of her heart.

After the Sub-Mariner came Dragon Man (issue 35), a reptilian android brought to an alchemical simulation of life by the dastardly Diablo (introduced five issues earlier). Dragon Man was possessed of vast strength, the ability to breathe fire, a pair of wings with which to fly . . . and the mentality of a 2-year-old. Unable to comprehend the world around him, Dragon Man lashed out violently against it. In a stroke of poetic genius on Lee and Kirby's part, Dragon Man was tamed by the beauty of the Invisible Girl—a situation reminiscent of King Kong and Fay Wray. At the end of issue 35, appropriately enough, Reed took Sue to the most romantic spot at Empire State University—a Lovers' Lane with a tree carved into the shape of a heart—and proposed to her.

One of the most special days of any woman's life is her wedding day. Susan Storm will certainly never forget hers. The ceremony (*FF Annual* 3, 1965) was "crashed" by nearly every Marvel super-villain of the early '60s. However, the Fantastic Four's guests included the X-Men, Avengers, Daredevil, Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D. The resulting donnybrook turned several Manhattan blocks into a combat zone—the entire thing set in motion by Dr. Doom, who planted hostile impulses towards the FF into the other villains' minds with his Emotion Charger machine.

While Sue was expecting Franklin, and for a short time afterwards, she was replaced in the FF by the Torch's girlfriend, Crystal the Elemental. Sue's pregnancy was complicated by the presence of "electro-flashes" in her blood cells, which may have killed both her and the unborn child if Reed, Johnny, and Ben had not fetched an anti-matter derivative from the Negative Zone with which to cure her. (However, they had to battle Annihilus in order to do so—see issues 78 and 79 and *Annual* 6, 1968.)

As a wife, a mother, *and* a super-heroine, the Invisible Girl occupies a special place in the Marvel Universe. In the '70s, when it became trendy for people both in fact and fiction to undergo "identity crises" and try to "find themselves," Sue and Reed's marriage went through an extremely difficult period which, as described earlier, nearly ended in divorce. After the reconciliation, she flirted very briefly with the idea of becoming a private detective and leaving the Fantastic Four altogether (issue 158). But by the following issue, she made up her mind to return to the team, and has been an active member ever since.

Sue is fiercely loyal to the Fantastic Four and will fight like a tigress when her loved ones are threatened. Issue 89, for example, has the FF and Crystal at the mercy of the Mole Man, who has driven them blind and given Reed a possibly fatal jolt of energy. Hurling herself at the sound of his voice, Sue tackles him in a fit of rage. Still, she is of a very compassionate and sentimental nature and has a bit of a tendency to think with her heart. At times she wishes her husband were more the same way. Issues 48, 56, and 64 are among the many stories in which Sue finds Reed unromantic and inattentive and wishes he would look up from his test tubes and machines and notice her. But she does love him and knows that he loves her. She trusts him implicitly, follows his orders without question, and is completely devoted to her son Franklin, who is her life's greatest joy. In spite of the name "Invisible Girl," Susan Richards is a very warm, loving and spirited *woman.*

Johnny Storm, the Human Torch

"What can an ordinary college life hold for someone who's traveled beyond the galaxy . . . someone who's had a glimpse of the wonders of the unknown cosmos? Will I be able to sit in class, day after day, after having tasted the freedom, the excitement, and the glory of being the Human Torch?"

The answer to Johnny's question on his first day of college in issue 50 turned out to be "no." He had enrolled at Metro College, but he never finished his freshman year. Because he was one of the Fantastic Four, the life of typical American youth was destined to elude Johnny Storm.

Before he became the Human Torch, Johnny was a student at Glenville High School. His favorite pastime was auto mechanics. To this day, he loves to tinker with engines and race cars, and probably once entertained the idea of becoming a famous racer. Johnny has a very quick temper; he can fly off the handle very easily. And ever since the famous space flight, he has been incendiary both of temper and of body.

The Human Torch possesses the power to cause all or part of his body to burst into flame. He can make his fire shoot behind him, enabling him to fly like a rocket. He can shoot fire from his hands and hurl fireballs. He is also able to absorb heat into his body and has a limited power to control flame from other sources (such as cigarette lighters—see issue 233). The Torch's greatest power is that of a "super-nova blast" whose intense heat was once said to be capable of killing half the people in the northern hemisphere (by Dr. Doom in issue 58). This was obviously a gross overestimation, as Johnny has used his nova flame on numerous occasions without such dire consequences.

The most frequent target of Johnny's temper has been the Thing. The relationship of these two characters has often been explosive, and many Fantastic Four

adventures have the Torch and the Thing bickering and brawling in the team's headquarters. (Johnny had been known to make insensitive jokes about the Thing's appearance, and this has caused many of the fights.) However, there has almost never been any doubt that Johnny and Ben are good friends, and that one of them would never hesitate to risk his life for the other. When the Torch had his own series in *Strange Tales* (issues 101-134), the Thing appeared with him for the last ten issues of the run.

The Torch had a celebrated love/hate relationship with Marvel's other major teenage hero of the '60s, the amazing Spider-Man. As some teens are wont to do, the Torch and Spider-Man engaged each other in rather "heated" competitions. More often than not, they were brought together by a super-villain or villains: the Green Goblin in *Spider-Man* 17, Mysterio and the Wizard in *Spider-Man Annual* 4 (1967), Dr. Doom (indirectly) in *Fantastic Four* 73, and the Lizard in *Spider-Man* 77. Also, *Strange Tales Annual* 2 (1963) has Spidey crashing a party where Torch is showing off his powers to his friends. As the two of them grew older, though, they became friends. They made numerous appearances together in the *Marvel Team-Up* series, and Johnny helped Spidey build his "Spider-Mobile" in *Spider-Man* 127.

During his *Strange Tales* days, Johnny had a typical high-school romance with a girl by the name of Dorrie Evans. Like most such relationships, it ran its course and cooled off—and then Johnny found a deeper and more serious love in *Fantastic Four* 45. Her name was Crystal, and she was an Inhuman.

To all appearances, Crystal was just a very innocent, sweet, frail girl. She even wore a plain, drab white dress. But while Crystal may have been innocent, she was anything but frail. She held a preternatural influence over the elements: earth, wind, fire and water. Powerful enough to battle the Fantastic Four singlehandedly, Crystal was the very soul of sweetness and gentleness, and she seized Johnny Storm's heart the moment he set eyes on her. As fate would have it, though, she and the rest of her people were imprisoned in their own hidden Great Refuge, behind a Negative Barrier created by Maximus, the demented brother of the Inhumans' ruler, Black Bolt (issue 48).

Thinking that he had lost Crystal forever, Johnny picked up the pieces the best he could. After the first coming of Galactus (issue 48-50), he enrolled at Metro College, where he met his best friend, Wyatt Wingfoot, a tall, muscular American Indian athlete from Tulsa, Oklahoma. But even then, the adventures of the Fantastic Four would throw diversions and obstacles in Johnny's path. Circumstances would prevent him from rescuing Crystal *or* finishing college.

There was the FF's involvement with the Black Panther and Klaw. Then, Johnny and Wyatt discovered Prester John, the Wanderer, armed with the Evil Eye, a super-powerful weapon from the lost kingdom of Avalon. Johnny thought that the Eye possessed the power to shatter the Negative Barrier, so he seized it from Prester John and flew off with it. Unfortunately, the Wanderer did not set the Eye's safety mechanism and it self-destructed. (See issues 52-54, *The Avengers* 115-118 and *The Defenders* 8-11.) Then Johnny and Wyatt found that Crystal's giant bulldog, Lockjaw, was able to teleport himself out from behind the Barrier. Their efforts to make him teleport them back *in* met with no success. (Issues 55, 57, 58 and *Annual* 4, 1966.) And then Dr. Doom stole the powers of the Silver Surfer (issue 57-60). It was the power of Black Bolt that finally liberated the Inhumans in issue 59, and Crystal returned to Johnny and the FF just in time to enlist her cousin Triton's aid in saving Reed from the Negative Zone (issue 62).

With her troubles seemingly over, Crystal moved in with the Fantastic Four, and even took to wearing a customized FF uniform to replace Sue when she had Franklin (issue 81). When Sue came back (issue 86), Crystal still shared the team's adventures, turning the FF into a Fantastic *Five*. (Many fans, thinking Crystal was there to stay, even suggested an official change in the magazine's title.)

A tragic turn came in issue 105, as Crystal's lack of immunity to atmospheric pollutants outside the Great Refuge caught up with her and she was forced to return. This proved to be the beginning of the end. After several months of agonizing, Crystal had a change of heart and decided to marry Quicksilver, the mutant super-hero from the Avengers. This decision left the Torch depressed and heartsick for months (issue 132). The wedding of Crystal and Quicksilver took place in *Fantastic Four* 150. She had a baby girl in *FF* 240.

From *FF* 132 to 159, Johnny wore a red and yellow outfit much like that of the original Human Torch—who was enslaved by the Thinker in *FF Annual* 4 and forced to battle Johnny. Upon his defeat, the Thinker "killed" the android Torch, who was later turned into the Vision by the evil robot Ultron-5 (*The Avengers* 133-135). A later incarnation of Ultron menaced the FF, the Avengers, and the Inhumans at Crystal's wedding. The Vision joined the Avengers in issue 58 of that series and is married to Quicksilver's sister, the Scarlet Witch (*Giant-Size Avengers* 4).

Once his involvement with Crystal ended, Johnny became interested in Frankie Raye (issue 164), who proved to be first an enigma and then a surprise. For

several months, Frankie perplexed Johnny with her apparent fear and loathing of his powers. Later, she broke up with him (issue 204), saying that a super-hero and an ordinary woman could not have a future together. Bouncing back from this rejection, Johnny started dating Lorrie Melton, a racetrack pit mechanic whom he met in issue 222. This relationship did not last long: by issue 232, Johnny was trying to win Frankie back. He did his best, but he still could not understand why his powers repelled her so. The secret has finally come out: Frankie is the stepdaughter of Professor Phineas T. Horton, the creator of the original Human Torch! Frankie was accidentally soaked in some of the chemicals that Horton used in the creation of the android, and gained flame powers of her own. Terrified that he had turned the girl into a freak, Professor Horton hypnotically erased her memory of her powers and then disappeared, sending her a specially created costume that can "absorb" into her skin and which helps her control her powers. The whole story is in issue 238.

Though Johnny Storm has missed out on many of the experiences of growing up, he has also seen and done all manner of things that most people his age can scarcely imagine. Longtime Fantastic Four fans can only hope that he will at last find the love and happiness he deserves with his new-found female counterpart. The Human Torch and Frankie make quite a couple.

Benjamin J. Grimm, the Thing

"I'm always yellin' at ol' Stretcho—and Torchy too. But some day . . . I gotta tell 'em . . . how I really feel about 'em . . . if a big ape like me can ever find the words! Somehow . . . bein' with them . . . I never felt so much like . . . the monster I know I really am!"

Such is the personal tragedy of Benjamin J. Grimm, as expressed in *Fantastic Four* 68. The question of what his middle initial stands for is unanswered to this day. He has a frequently mentioned Aunt Petunia, whom John Byrne has just introduced in a recent *FF* issue. Ben Grimm is a kind, sensitive, noble, and basically gentle man on whom fate has played a cruel and agonizing joke that will not go away. The cosmic rays in issue 1 have transformed him into an incredibly massive orange-skinned monster. The Thing's body is covered with a thick, near-impregnable armor that gives him a monstrous, nightmarish appearance (though it is a credit to Jack Kirby's sense of character design that the Thing does have a certain indigenous appeal). The texture of the Thing's hide has gone through several years of evolution. At first it resembled a coarse dinosaur skin, and it has gradually taken on a rocky, craggy, faceted look. By the time Joe Sinnott's slick, tight, precise inking first appeared over Kirby's pencil work (issue 44), the Thing as we know him had emerged. (At this writing, a startling transformation in issue 238 has regressed him back to the dinosaur hide.)

The Thing is possessed of vast strength. Just how strong is he? In *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual* 15 (1981), Mark Gruenwald ranks Ben among the "heavyweights" of Marvel super-heroes—a classification that includes the Sub-Mariner (on land), the Vision (at maximum density), and Black Bolt of the Inhumans. Among the characters who are stronger than Ben are the Hulk, Thor, and Wonder Man.

Ben is just about as quick-tempered as Johnny and can be extremely dangerous when he is angry. He is often put at ease, however, by his love for the FF's longest-running supporting character, Alicia Masters. Alicia first appeared in issue 8, when it was revealed that she is the stepdaughter of Philip Masters, the Puppet Master, a recently reformed super-villain. The romance of Ben and Alicia has a subtle poetry about it, as Alicia is completely blind. Being unable to see the monster that is the Thing, Alicia loves the kind and gentle man who dwells underneath. Theirs is a fascinating "Beauty and the Beast" relationship. As Sue Richards described it in issue 68: "It's like a fairy tale . . . a beautiful blind girl, in love with a man whose deformity she cannot see."

Alicia is a renowned sculptress. She is able to "see" people and objects around her with her keen sense of touch and has created countless statues of the Fantastic Four and the other heroes and villains they have encountered. (In *Marvel Two-In-One* 60, she held a major exhibition in a Manhattan art gallery.) Her love of the Thing seems to have a way of placing her in perilous situations. In issue 47, the Thing and the Torch are pursuing Dragon Man, who demolishes her apartment. In issue 49, Ben has knocked the Silver Surfer through her skylight and she awakens his noble, compassionate traits by imploring him to help the FF stop his master, Galactus, from destroying the Earth. ("Perhaps we are not as powerful as your Galactus . . . but we have hearts . . . we have souls . . . we live, breathe, feel! Can't you see that? Are you as blind as I?") She is abducted to the Beehive to sculpt the nascent superbeing known as Him (issues 65 to 67). There is no doubt that Alicia is the most precious thing in the world to Ben. He once even dared to battle the Silver Surfer when he thought the Surfer was trying to steal Alicia's affections (issue 55).

The Thing is the exact opposite of his best friend, Mr. Fantastic. Reed is a consummate intellectual, while Ben . . . is not. (He does seem to have a fondness for horror stories, though—see *FF* issue 58 and *Marvel Two-In-One Annual* 2, 1977.) Ben has a gift for malapropism *a la* Archie Bunker. (A Thing-style Shakespearean quote from issue 68: "What's in a moniker? A rose by any other name'll still give ya hay fever!") He was a football hero in college and a fighter ace with the Marines in World War II. During the '50s, he was a test pilot, and then he became part of the Fantastic Four. (He is also featured regularly in the spinoff series, *Marvel Two-In-One*.) A subtlety of Reed and Ben's friendship, according to John Byrne, is that each one is "what the other one wishes he could be. Reed, the intellectual, often wishes he could be the brawling, tough, football hero-type that Ben is. Ben wishes he was as intellectually motivated as Reed" (*Amazing Heroes* 1).

While such ado was made about the Torch/Spider-Man relationship, a similar amount of attention was given the antagonism between the Thing and Marvel's other major "monster" hero, the Incredible Hulk. Several noteworthy stories are variations on the theme of "the Fantastic Four (particularly the Thing) vs. the Hulk." These can be found in *FF* 12, 25, 26, 112, 166, 167, *Giant-Size Super-Stars* 1, and *Marvel Feature* 11. The classic Thing/Hulk battle is most likely *FF* 25 and 26. This tense, dramatic story has the Hulk (who is being chased by the Avengers) battling the Thing, while Reed has been laid low by an unknown lab virus, the Torch is wounded and in the hospital, and Sue, who is just learning to use her force-field power, cannot cope with the Hulk's attack.

Many Fantastic Four storylines have revolved around Ben's wish to be cured of being the Thing. In the early days, he would revert to Ben Grimm spontaneously, only to make an equally abrupt change back to the Thing (as in issues 2 and 4). Sometimes, Reed would find a cure, which would either prove to be temporary (issue 11) or have an undesirable side-effect (in issues 38 to 40). Here, the FF are caught in a nuclear explosion

set by the Frightful Four. While Sue's force field saves them from being destroyed by the radiation, they *all* lose their powers—which, of course, is good news for Ben. Unfortunately, Dr. Doom chooses that time to attack, and Reed must save the team by restoring their powers with his power amplifier—thereby subjecting his best friend to his tragic transformation once more. In fury and pain, Ben smashes Dr. Doom's hands and chestplate and leaves the villain to limp away in humiliation. Meanwhile, Ben quits the team and falls into the clutches of the ever-persistent Frightful Four, who brainwash him and turn him into a villain. The Thing's partners managed to save him—and themselves—just in time for Reed and Sue's wedding (see issues 41 to 43).

Reed's greatest failure has been in his efforts to cure the Thing. His every attempt to restore Ben to normal has been met with detrimental side effects and unfortunate circumstances. Issue 78 has Reed finally hitting upon a permanent, one-way cure: it works, but only once. If it is ever reversed, that particular method (involving a potion that made Ben's body discharge all the cosmic energy) can never work again. That issue, Ben is helpless against the attack of the Wizard, and the next issue, when Alicia is threatened by one of the Thinker's androids, Ben takes a charge of energy from the dangerous "Wonder Gloves" that the FF captured from the Wizard . . . and another cure bites the dust, as the Thing returns to save his beloved.

Later, in issue 107, Reed devises a way for Ben to effect his change into the Thing at will. This time, the side-effect is that Ben becomes vicious and uncontrollable and leaves the Fantastic Four. Only after the Thing has been knocked into oblivion by the Hulk at the end of issue 112 can his teammates take him home to negate Ben's control over his appearance.

Ben's greatest fear is that if he were not the Thing, Alicia would not love him. At the opening of issue 25, Ben is actually afraid to drink a chemical formula that Reed is certain will change Ben back to his normal self permanently. He destroys the vial and his opportunity, protesting that Alicia loves him in this monstrous form and would never feel the same way about his true self. However, he has also thought that what Alicia feels for the Thing is not love, but pity, and could easily choose someone else over him (hence, his paranoia over the Silver Surfer). He often despairs that he will never become normal and enjoy a happy life with the woman he loves, and is bitterly hurt in issue 236 when his dream seems to have come true, but is in fact a cruel trap into which he and the FF have been thrust by Dr. Doom. His dream of once again becoming the man he was and sharing the rest of his life with Alicia inevitably leads him back to the fear that she would reject him if he were not the Thing, and nothing that she or anyone else says seems to be able to change his mind. For Ben Grimm, life as the Thing is an unending litany of pain.

One of the most clever plot twists involving the Thing was devised by Roy Thomas, George Perez, and Rich Buckler. In issue 167, Ben was exposed to gamma ray emissions from the Hulk and restored to human form—and promptly began to feel useless as Reed replaced him with Power Man the following issue. A couple of months later, Reed found a way for Ben to simulate the power of the Thing. By wearing a special exo-skeleton, Ben regained his monstrous appearance (while remaining human underneath) and also gained back 90 percent of the Thing's strength.

All of this worked very well until the FF battled Galactus on Counter-Earth in issue 175. Galactus, sensing that this was not "the real Thing," gave Ben

an energy blast whose delayed effect turned him back to the Thing and destroyed the exo-skeleton.

Doctor Doom

"And so, my final and complete victory is almost within my grasp. But what does it mean? Will I be any happier once I've defeated the Fantastic Four? No victory can ever restore my normal face to me. No conquest can make me the man I once was."

This insight into the mind of popular literature's most complex figure of evil is from *FF Annual* 2, 1964. In terms of sheer villainy, Victor Von Doom is second to none. There is a resemblance between him and Darth Vader from *Star Wars*, but Doom predates that character by 15 years. He first appeared in *FF* 5, 1962.

Doctor Doom is the consummate villain, a character against whom all other such characters are measured. Though his real vendetta is against the Fantastic Four, practically every other major Marvel hero and team has had to face him at one time or other. The maze that is Dr. Doom's psyche has fascinated an entire generation of Marvel's "true believers," and promises to continue doing so for many years to come.

Earth's greatest menace is, in fact, a proud, angry, bitter, lonely man. Though he is unspeakably evil, he carries great sadness and pain within him.

Doom regards everyone else in the world as being low and contemptible. He believes that the rest of mankind wants him to suffer destruction, humiliation, and death, or else why would his parents, who never harmed a soul, have been persecuted and killed? It has been revealed that the objective of Doom's college experiment to contact the netherworld was to communicate with his mother's spirit (*What If?* 22 and *Iron Man* 150).

The Doctor's other reason for hating the world is the

destruction of his face. (In a time-honored Marvel tradition, Doom's ravaged features have never been laid bare to the readers, nor is it likely that they ever will be.) His towering ego will not let him accept that he has inflicted something so devastating on himself, and so he projects the blame onto Reed Richards, accusing him of sabotaging the experiment (see *FF* 200). The rivalry between Reed and Dr. Doom is bitter and intense, as Doom insists that he is in every way Reed's superior. On one memorable occasion (*FF Annual* 2), the two of them determine to prove once and for all which is truly the master of the other. Using Reed's "encephalogun," they engage in a kind of mental arm-wrestling match in which the one with the greater mentality will banish the other from existence. At the height of their conflict, Reed disappears before Doom's eyes and the Doctor swaggers away in triumph—not realizing that Reed has hypnotized him into believing that Doom has finally prevailed. As fate would have it, though, Reed's trance dissolves just in time for Doom to attack the FF when they are powerless in issue 39.

This, then, is the basis for Dr. Doom's villainy: his belief that there is nothing and no one in the world for him to believe in, nothing of real value for him to hold onto except his ambitions; and that the destruction of his once-handsome features has diminished him as a human being. Because of his tremendous pride, he can neither show forgiveness nor accept his lot. Therefore, he believes that the world must first be punished for what has happened to him, and then made over to his exacting specifications. One of the things Doom would most like to see is a world without a Fantastic Four.

When all of Dr. Doom's obsessions and fixations came to a head several years ago, he was engaged in a mortal struggle with Mr. Fantastic, who managed to remove his mask and expose him to millions of solar-powered reflections of his face in the mirrors of Doom's Solartron Complex. As a result, the armored arch-fiend suffered a complete, colossal mental breakdown, which put an end to his rule of Latveria and could have been the end of his career (*FF* 200). However, he was revived by a number of his lackeys (*FF Annual* 15, 1980) and went on to plague Spider-Man and Dr. Strange (*Spider-Man Annual* 14, 1980), the Dazzler (issues 3 and 4 of her series), the X-Men (in *X-Men* issues 145 to 147), and Iron Man (issues 149 and 150 of his title) before returning to threaten the FF (*FF* 236). At this writing, Dr. Doom's psyche is trapped in a miniature robot facsimile somewhere in his Adirondack castle. Meanwhile, Reed has the Doctor's body in a stasis field at the Baxter Building (issue 237). Before very long, Dr. Doom will surely return to repay his foes for making him suffer this latest "indignity."

A thoroughly intriguing part of the Dr. Doom legend is the time-travel paradox that somehow relates him to a number of other characters. This curious situation, centers around the Doctor's time machine, which the FF confiscated after issue 5. For diplomatic reasons, Reed had to return the original time machine to its creator (*FF Annual* 11, 1976), but before he did so, the FF's leader built a duplicate of the device, which is installed in the Baxter Building. (This machine was last used by the Thing in *Marvel Two-In-One* 50.)

FF 19 introduces a villain called Pharoah Rama-Tut, who claims to be from the 40th century. He tells the FF that when he visited the ruins of an "amazing ancestor's" property (which bore a haunting resemblance to a castle), he found the plans for a time machine, which he built into a Sphinx and used to travel back to ancient Egypt, which he proceeded to conquer. Was this ancestor with the castle (like the one in the Adirondacks) and the time machine, in fact, Dr. Doom?

In *FF Annual* 2, Rama-Tut encounters Dr. Doom floating in space in the 20th century, somewhere near the planet Jupiter (Doom was cast into space at the end of *FF* 23). Taking him aboard, the Pharaoh identifies Doom in no uncertain terms as the ancestor in question. But Doom proposes, "What if I myself went to the future? What if you are me? What if Rama-Tut and Dr. Doom are the same man?" Simultaneously, they wonder aloud, "But . . . if we're both the same man, how can we co-exist at the same moment in eternity?"

At length, the two went their separate ways. The Doctor resumed his private war with the FF. The Pharaoh proceeded into the future and a succession of identity changes, becoming the Scarlet Centurion; Kang the Conqueror; an older, benificent Rama-Tut; and ultimately Immortus, Master of Time. It is Immortus who, in issue 133 of *The Avengers*, reflects on having lived *five lives*. Was Victor Von Doom the persona that gave rise to all the others? In *The Avengers* issue 24, Kang thinks, "Doctor Doom! Little do they dream how closely related I am to the greatest arch-fiend of all time!" The myriad complexities of this situation are examined in the second issue of *Omniverse*, Mark Gruenwald's journal of fictional reality.

Though he has been toppled from his throne and separated from his body, the armor-clad menace has overcome countless other setbacks and will doubtless work unceasingly in the future to bring civilization as we know it to its . . . "Doom."

Franklin Benjamin Richards

The first offspring of the first super-hero marriage was born in *FF Annual* 6, 1968. It was not until a year after he was born that his parents got around to giving him a name. In issue 94, they named him for Sue and

Johnny's father, Franklin Storm; and the boy's godfather, Benjamin Grimm. During Sue's celebrated pregnancy and for some time afterward, the FF's letters page carried many letters from fans speculating on whether the child would be a boy or a girl (or twins, or stillborn) and what—if any—its powers would be. At present, there is no doubt that Franklin Richards is a mutant of potentially awesome powers and could become one of the most powerful beings on Earth.

Franklin first manifested his powers in issue 112, in which he innocently controlled the motions of a colony of ants. As stated earlier, the premature awakening of Franklin's full power by Annihilus nearly resulted in the destruction of the world—a calamity averted only be Reed's shutting down his son's mind. In issue 150, the boy was inadvertently revived from his coma by the psychic assault of Ultron-7—and in the throes of his awakening, he blasted the robot villain to kingdom come.

Since then, Franklin has had an eerie habit of summoning forth his powers whenever he has seen his family threatened. Most recently, he defended Reed and Sue from Spinnerette in issue 237. Franklin has repeatedly demonstrated that he can change his thoughts into reality—a power which may place him in the class of Phoenix and Proteus from the X-Men. This power and the fact that Franklin is a mutant should (if and when the writers decide to derive stories from this idea) serve as a basis for some relationship between the Fantastic Four and the X-Men, as Franklin should attract the attention of mutant specialist Charles Xavier. Fascinatingly, in one possible future of Marvel-Earth, an adult Franklin is a member of that group of mutant heroes (*The X-Men* 141 and 142).

Franklin's arrival naturally had some serious implications in the lives of the Fantastic Four. How were they to protect him from their many powerful foes? Sue thought she had the answer when she went looking for a secluded house in the suburbs. But the "house" turned out to be the property of the FF's old enemy, the Mole Man—and it gave off radiations that drove them and Crystal blind! (Issues 88 and 89.) After the Mole Man was defeated, a better solution to the problem of Franklin's safety was found. In issue 94, Reed and Sue engendered the services of Agatha Harkness as their son's governess. Agatha lived in an old mansion atop Whisper Hill—a mansion that resembled something out of *Dark Shadows*. She had only her black cat, Ebony, for companionship. Ebony was Agatha's familiar, possessed of strange and frightening powers (as the Frightful Four learned when they attacked Whisper Hill). And Agatha herself was a rather formidable witch, slightly reminiscent of Agnes Moorehead from the TV series *Bewitched*. (Was this possibly Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's source of inspiration? The show was still on the air and very popular at the time.)

Agatha served as Franklin's governess from issue 94 to 223. It was she who first became aware of the boy's potential (issue 103). Agatha came to Whisper Hill in upstate New York from the hidden town of New Salem, Colorado, to which the witches of old Salem, Massachusetts, fled after their historical persecution. Agatha's son was a vile creature by the name of Nicholas Scratch, whose super-powered demonic slaves were known as the Salem Seven (issue 184 to 186, 223, and *Annual* 14, 1979). After her son's last plot to take over the world, Agatha resigned her post as Franklin's governess and returned to her people as their leader.

In "real" time, Franklin is 13 years old. In the sometimes elastic, sometimes compressive continuum of the Marvel Universe, though, he is not even in kindergarten yet. In fact, it was not even until issue 164 that he began speaking. At present, Franklin is being taken care of by a special robot built by Reed. This robot, modeled after the "Herbie" robot which appeared in issues 209 to 217 (a Jack Kirby creation for the animated *Fantastic Four* series on NBC television), is programmed to instruct Franklin in proper grammar and monitor him for any manifestations of his powers. In Franklin Richards, we have a unique and fascinating opportunity to watch a young boy grow up with superpowers . . . even if the Fantastic Four will be celebrating their 40th anniversary by the time he starts first grade.

The Watcher

In *FF* 13, Reed decided to investigate a mysterious "blue area" of the Moon. This area turned out to contain the ruins of an ancient city—and an artificial atmosphere. As revealed in *The Avengers* 133, this city was built by members of the Kree race in competition with the now-extinct race of Cotati for the technological benefits of the Skrulls.

Upon arriving on the Moon, the FF discovered that a Soviet villain, the Red Ghost, had the same idea. He had traveled through the same cosmic rays that had bombarded the Fantastic Four. The Red Ghost and his trio of trained apes all gained super-powers of their own, with which to battle the FF. However, they were all destined to discover that someone was living in the Moon's blue city: a being of nigh-infinite power, who would not tolerate these hostilities in his home. A being called . . . the Watcher.

The Watcher is one of many such beings, an entire race of cosmic historians, each one assigned to chronicle the events in a different galaxy, and each one bound to a strict code of non-intervention in the doings of other races. This is because of their sense of collective guilt over the destruction of the planet Prosilicus, with which they had tampered. (See "Tales of the Watcher" in *The Silver Surfer* 1, a story retold from *Tales of Suspense* 53.)

It developed that the Watcher has a "weak spot" for the people of the planet Earth, and for the Fantastic Four in particular. This fondness on his part has repeatedly led him to bend the rules and participate indirectly when the Earth has been endangered. However, pangs of conscience have at times caused the Watcher's actions to be erratic. He appeared when the Molecule Man attacked (issue 20) and during "The Galactus Trilogy," but turned his back on the menace of the cosmic-powered Dr. Doom (issue 60).

Eventually, the other Watchers grew tired of the well-meaning indiscretions of their peer and placed him on trial (*Captain Marvel* 36 to 39). As a "disciplinary" measure, the Watcher was made to admit his mistake and vow never again to violate the ethic. For the most part, he has kept his word, appearing in times of crisis only to observe. At times, he has even gone so far as to observe without speaking—a tendency which proved irksome to the Fantastic Four.

The *voyeur* of the void appears regularly as the "host" of Marvel's alternate-reality series, *What If?*

The Inhumans

Building on the super-scientific knowledge they had appropriated from the Skrulls (*The Avengers* 234), the barbaric race of the Kree became one of the most powerful races in the known universe. Ever seeking new ways of combatting the Skrulls, the Kree turned their attention to the genetic manipulation of "lesser" beings to produce powerful, ultra-intelligent slaves. One of the worlds with which the Kree tampered was prehistoric Earth, on whose moon their ancestors had built the Watcher's blue city. They isolated one tribe

of primitive humans and gave them an evolutionary "boost," then departed, leaving behind one of their powerful sentry robots to guard their earthly outpost. Some time later, Intergalactis Sentry 459 investigated the rather awesome activities on an island called Attilan, whose human inhabitants had created a scientific wonderland.

These people were the result of the Kree's genetic engineering, and had learned for themselves how to manipulate the DNA molecule. By the time Sentry 459 arrived on Attilan, King Randac had exposed himself to the fateful Terrigen Mist and emerged with incredible powers. The Sentry chose not to challenge Randac; he simply departed, saying that Randac's people would henceforth consider themselves "Inhuman." And so they did. The Sentry then vanished into history—and the pages of *FF* 64, in which the Fantastic Four destroyed him, prompting the Supreme Intelligence of the Kree to send Ronan the Accuser to "punish" them the following issue. (Refer also to "Tales of the Inhumans" in *Thor* 146 to 152.)

In *FF* 36, the Wizard, a foe of the Human Torch from *Strange Tales*, banded together with a pair of other villains, the Sandman and Paste-Pot Pete (who later changed his name to the Trapster), and they set themselves to the task of destroying the Fantastic Four. Lacking a fourth member powerful enough to challenge the Invisible Girl, they recruited a mysterious woman named Madam Medusa, whose serpentine, clutching "living hair" made her very formidable. With Medusa's arrival, this band of evil-doers became the Frightful Four.

But it turned out that Medusa was an Inhuman on the run from her insane cousin, Maximus, who had overthrown the rule of Attilan. (By this time, Attilan had been moved to a hidden location in the Himalayan Mountains . . . or at least, that is where most stories involving the Inhumans have Attilan located. *FF* 47 places it in the Andes, while *Incredible Hulk Annual* 1, 1968, places it in the Alps.) Medusa and the rest of the Royal Family of Inhumans were being chased by Maximus's servant, the Seeker. The Fantastic Four wanted to learn more about them (and besides, the Torch had fallen in love with Medusa's sister, Crystal) and pursued them all back to Attilan, the Great Refuge—where the entire civilization of Inhumans was trapped in short order beneath a dome of negative matter that Maximus created when the rightful king, his brother Black Bolt, seized the crown back (issue 47). After the Inhumans were liberated from the Negative Barrier, they maintained their friendly relations with the Fantastic Four. From issue 132 to 159, while Sue and Reed were separated, Medusa took the Invisible Girl's place in the Fantastic Four.

Aside from Medusa and Crystal, the Royal Family of Inhumans consists of:

Black Bolt—The majestic ruler of the Inhumans is one of Marvel's most powerful heroes. He possesses the power to fly, which is attributable to the pair of glider membranes attached to his costume underneath his arms. He is as strong as the Thing and capable of drawing energy from the electrons in the atmosphere. His greatest power is one of the most unique powers ever conceived: if he dares to let even the slightest sound issue from his throat, he will unleash a destructive force more powerful than an H-bomb. (It was this power that freed his people in issue 59: he destroyed the Negative Barrier by yelling at it!) Black Bolt and Medusa are in love, apparently at a dignified distance. We never see any warm passionate embraces between these two cousins, but there is no doubt that each one's heart belongs to the other.

Gorgon—Gruff, cynical Gorgon, apparently without a sentimental bone in his body (though appearances are deceiving), is distinguished by his having not feet, but a pair of massive hooves which generate earthquakes when he stomps them.

Triton—Owing to the fact that he is completely green and scaly (and Kirby used to draw him with a fin running the length of his back), Triton is more at home in the sea than on land. Super-strong and able to withstand the crushing pressures at great depths, Triton is able to breathe only water. He can live on land, if he must, by means of saline circulators devised by Maximus (who became even more erratic than ever after his creation of the Barrier—see issue 54).

Karnak—While Bruce Lee was starring in TV's *The Green Hornet*, Marvel had introduced its first martial arts hero in the person of Karnak the Inhuman. Calm, rational, philosophical Karnak is able to sense the weakest point in the structure of any object—and shatter it with a single karate blow.

Maximus—Black Bolt's brother has no apparent power of his own, but is a scientific genius and has created all sorts of fiendish devices in his efforts to overthrow his brother's rule. He often employs underlings and pawns in his machinations, such as the atavistic Alpha Primitives (introduced in issue 47) and a group of Evil Inhumans (Stallior, Leonus, Falcona, Aireo, and Timberius from *Hulk Annual* 1, 1968; and Nebulo from *Hulk* 119). As pointed out earlier, Maximus is utterly, irretrievably insane.

Lockjaw—Crystal's pet is a bulldog about the size of a baby hippo. His name is Lockjaw, and he has a pair of antennae on his head. These antennae give him the power to shift himself into one universe and out another, and teleport from place to place.

The Black Panther

The Black Panther is T'Challa, the Chieftain of Wakanda, an African nation that is one of the greatest technological superpowers in the world. How did an obscure African tribe rise to such a stature? The answer lies in Wakanda's chief export: a metal called vibranium.

Vibranium has a very special property that makes

even a small quantity of the metal worth a fortune: it absorbs vibrations. The substance, which is found only in Wakanda, has many practical applications in science and the military, and therefore can be especially dangerous if it falls into the hands of super-villains. One villain, in particular, showed a keen interest in vibranium. His name is Klaw, and he called himself the Master of Sound. When T'Challa was only a child, Wakanda was invaded by Klaw and his men, who stole some of the vibranium and killed T'Challa's father, the chieftain T'Chaka. The vengeful boy shot off Klaw's hand, but the villain vowed to return.

In the intervening years, T'Challa grew to manhood and assumed leadership of the tribe. He sold small quantities of the vibranium to a number of scientific interests, thereby accumulating an immense private fortune which he used to pay his way through some of the world's most prestigious universities. As his people's chieftain, he also underwent intense rituals and partook of certain secret herbs in honor of Wakanda's sacred animal, the black panther. This way, he gained some of the special abilities of the panther himself, such as acute eyesight (which is not hindered by darkness), a sense of smell by which he can detect an enemy's presence, and highly-developed agility.

By the time Klaw returned, T'Challa, as the Black Panther, had built Wakanda into a unique combination of tribal culture and super-technocracy. To be absolutely certain that he was ready to face Klaw again, the Panther tested his skills in a safari—in which he hunted the Fantastic Four and Wyatt Wingfoot, whom he had invited to Wakanda for a vacation! He befriended them just in time to enlist their aid in fighting Klaw. Once the Master of Sound was defeated, he crawled into his "sound transformer" machine and emerged as a being whose physical structure was composed entirely of sound (*FF* 52, 53 and 56).

The Black Panther's background of tribal tradition and technological expansion, plus his position as Marvel's first Black super-hero, makes him a thoroughly fascinating character. Unfortunately, his position in the supporting cast of *The Fantastic Four* has been played down, as he has also served as a member of the Avengers and had his own series. However, this may be about to change now that John Byrne is on the scene. The Panther has just appeared in *FF* 241.

The Impossible Man

"Name? We Poppupians have no names! We *know* who we are!" So said the entity known as the Impossible Man, from *FF* 11. The Impossible Man belongs to a special category of science-fictional characters: the perfectly harmless aliens whose actions appear evil. (Other characters in this vein include the Infant Terrible from *FF* 24, the extraterrestrials from issue 221, and Spinnerette from issue 237.)

The Impossible Man is from the planet Poppup (destroyed by Galactus, who was stricken with a case of cosmic indigestion as a result, in issue 175). He carries within him the collective consciousness of his people, and the ability to create other Poppupians from the stuff of his being (as when he made himself a mate, the Impossible Woman, in *Marvel Two-In-One* 60).

"Impy," as he is sometimes called, is the product of his planet's runaway, rapid-fire evolution. In his "normal" form, he is tall, green, slender as a stick, with a head vaguely like a bowling pin. However, he is able to adapt his body instantly to take on any other form imaginable.

The thing that has routinely made the Impossible Man something of a pest is his zealous pursuit of "fun." His first appearance had him getting his "innocent" kicks robbing a bank and turning himself into a bomb, among other things. In his second visit to Earth, he terrorized the offices of Marvel Comics by adapting the weapons and powers of their super-heroes when they refused to give him his own comic book (issue 176). This was the beginning of a prolonged stay on Earth (he finally departed with the Impossible Woman in the aforementioned *Marvel Two-In-One* 60). During this time, he acquired a taste for Earthly media, such as television and movies (issues 184 and 186, for example).

Wyatt Wingfoot

The Human Torch's former college roommate (introduced in issue 50) is a Keewazi Indian from Oklahoma. As described earlier, Wyatt and Johnny grew to be best friends, and the young Indian shared some of the FF's most memorable adventures. In college, Wyatt was the star member of the football team (issue 61), following in the footsteps of his father, Will Wingfoot. Perhaps because of his father's influence and the importance of education to non-WASPs, Wyatt remained in college while Johnny dropped out. In issue 138, the Fantastic Four attended Wyatt's commencement ceremony, then accompanied him home to Oklahoma, where they were all menaced by the Miracle Man. Wyatt's last *Fantastic Four* appearance, at this writing, was in issue 192, in which he was teaching English to the children of his tribe. He also appeared recently in *Marvel Two-In-One Annual* 6, 1981.

Thundra

In an experimental magazine called *Savage Tales*, Stan Lee exposited a future world in which warrior-women—Femizons—ruled over subservient men. In *FF* 129, one of those Femizons turned up in the present, as Medusa's replacement in the Frightful Four. Her name was Thundra.

Thundra was as powerful as the Thing, and had been sent to this reality to defeat the world's strongest man. It seemed that the Femizons' reality was merging with that of Machus, where male warriors ruled over female slaves. Her fellow Femizons wanted Thundra to accomplish this task so that the defeated specimen of manhood could be made an example to the Femizons' man-slaves, who were turning against their mistresses. A "temporal field" surrounding the Baxter Building led her to the Thing, instead of the Hulk or Thor (We must assume that anything is possible when a given building contains both a time machine and a portal to another universe.) Joining the Frightful Four was an ideal way for Thundra to get to Ben Grimm, but it developed that she could not bring herself to tear him limb from limb—because she was falling in love with him!

Because of Thundra's inability to harm Ben, the Fantastic Four eventually found themselves at the mercy of Mahkizmo, the leader of Machus. In the wake of Mahkizmo's defeat, the two futures merged and all the men made peace (among other things) with all the women. This was fine, except that when the fusion of realities forced the Fantastic Four back to their own continuum, it sent Thundra with them. (Since Thundra learned through experience what the other Femizons and the Machans learned through a quirk of probability, she "belonged" in this world. See issues 151 to 153.) •

However, as Ben Grimm's heart belonged only to Alicia, Thundra found herself alone and out of place in this reality. And so, in *Marvel Two-In-One* 67, Thundra used the Nth Projector to escape into yet another alternate reality, in which her future did *not* merge with that of Machus. She was hotly pursued by the super-being known as Hyperion, who had fallen in love with her

after meeting her in *Two-In-One* 64. And may they live happily ever after.

Variations on the Fantastic Four

In the various alternate realities and parallel worlds of Marvel Comics, we occasionally find that the lives of Reed and Sue and Johnny and Ben have taken radically different directions than we are accustomed to seeing.

In a world called "Earth-A," the 1961 space flight produced very different results, as only Reed and Ben were aboard. Amazingly, Ben gained both the power to stretch and the power of flame (which he later lost) and married Sue. Why didn't Reed marry Sue? *Because he became the Thing!!* And in the meantime, Johnny was drafted and sent to Vietnam and turned up missing in action. Presumed dead, he was actually changed into the super-powered Gaard by the inter-dimensional barbarian, Arkon (*FF* 118, 160-163).

And on Counter-Earth, a twin Earth on the far side of the Sun (created by the High Evolutionary in *Marvel Premiere* 1 and stolen from its orbit by the Pegasans in *Two-In-One* 62), Sue was thrown into a permanent coma by the cosmic radiation, while Reed was affected years later when he turned into a monstrous berserker called the Brute. Unlike our Thing, the Reed Richards of Counter-Earth was able to control his transformation—so that when he traveled to this Earth, he was able to impersonate our Mr. Fantastic, who had conveniently lost his powers. He trapped this planet's Reed in the Negative Zone and took his place in the arms of our world's non-comatose Sue Richards—only to be shunted to the Negative Zone himself, from which he may or may never one day return (issues 177-183). And, in perhaps the most surprising twist of all, the Victor Von Doom of Counter-Earth . . . is a hero! (*Warlock* 6 and 7.)

Conclusion

The Fantastic Four is the longest-running series ever initiated by Marvel Comics, and one of the most successful publications of its kind in the world. Without it, the entire Marvel body of works as its fans all over the world have come to know it would never have come into being. Practically all of the characters introduced or re-introduced in the *FF* have been spun off into their own magazines—even Dr. Doom. (Among the exceptions have been the Yancy Street Gang, an unseen but obnoxious group of juvenile delinquents who have been antagonizing the Thing since issue 6.)

If, in the past decade of its existence, the *Fantastic Four* has faltered, it is mainly attributable to the departure of the two men who kept it vital and spectacular for 10 years. The end of the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby collaboration, which was to comics what the Beatles were to popular music (and at the very same period of time) coincided with the beginning of the '70s, a decade of disillusionment when new answers to old questions were being sought. A new generation that had lived through a time of social rebelliousness was now moving ahead. At times, there were those who believed that society and the individual had somehow lost their way. Where once people were "dropping out," they were now trying to "find themselves." And in a new decade when Marvel Comics seemed to be expanding in every direction, some sense of tradition seemed to be lost in the shuffle. The newer, younger writers and artists did their very best to build on what Lee, Kirby, and their contemporaries established, and at times produced some remarkable and outstanding material on their own. But as things moved ahead and they tried to keep the characters and stories fresh, changes were made. Reed and Sue split up. Medusa replaced the Invisible Girl for nearly two years. The Torch broke with

tradition with an individualized costume. The Thing got his own book. Dr. Doom, the Silver Surfer, and the other old familiar players appeared less frequently. But by the middle of the '70s, Sue returned and Medusa left, Johnny went back to his old uniform, and the Fantastic Four returned to a semblance of its former self.

Now, as we enter the '80s with a conservative president in office and the nation taking a swing to the right, some of the Marvel traditions of the '60s are returning. And nowhere else is this more apparent than in the book that started it all. John Byrne, who has been an FF enthusiast since the first appearance of Dr. Doom, is "turning back the clock" to the literary and visual style of the vintage *Fantastic Four*. Many of the old familiar touches that served Marvel's founding fathers so well are beginning to re-emerge, while Byrne seeks the perfect synthesis of new and old with his approaches to characters like Franklin Richards and Frankie Raye. In short, having reached its 20th anniversary, the *FF* is looking to its "roots" without forgetting that things must still continue to move into the future. The really important thing is that the old spirit has returned, and with a little luck and wisdom, it will be with us for a long time to come. It was this spirit that prompted Stan to proclaim with the third issue that the *Fantastic Four* was "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine."

Obviously, he knew what he was talking about. ■

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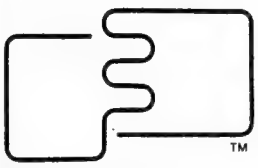

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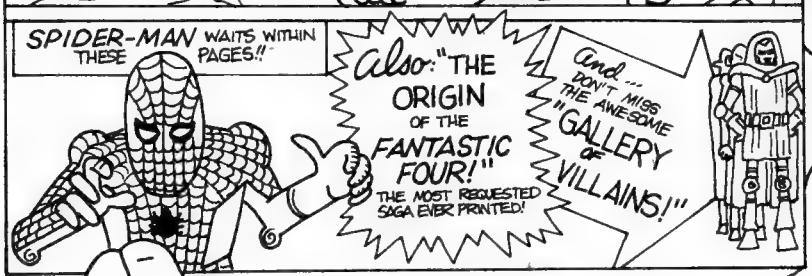
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AFTER 16 ISSUES, THE SUMMER OF 1963 SAW THE FANTASTIC FOUR REWARDED WITH THEIR OWN GIANT SIZED ANNUAL, MOST OF WHICH WAS BRAND-NEW MATERIAL.

ON THIS PAGE, YOU SEE A SOMEWHAT PERSONALIZED VERSION OF THE JACK KIRBY-DICK AYERS COVER DRAWING THAT HIT THE STANDS BACK IN THE DAWNING OF THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS.

BUT WHAT'S THAT ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE, YOU ASK? AH, YOU NOTICED! THAT, FOLKS, IS A PERSONALIZED REPRODUCTION OF THE FIRST, UNPUBLISHED, VERSION OF THE COVER OF F.F. ANNUAL #1.

WELL, ACTUALLY, IT WAS PUBLISHED -- IN FOOM MAGAZINE #8, DEC 1974. THAT'S WHERE I GOT IT FROM.

DOING MORE THAN ONE COVER WAS NOT UNHEARD OF IN THOSE DAYS. I ONCE SAW A REPRODUCTION OF A COVER STEVE DITKO DID FOR AMAZING FANTASY #15. ULTIMATELY, THE POWERS-THAT-WERE CHOSE A KIRBY RENDITION OF A SIMILAR SCENE FOR THAT GROUND-BREAKING ISSUE.

THEN THERE'S STRANGE TALES ANNUAL #2. ALTHOUGH THE ARTWORK IS VIRTUALLY UN-CHANGED, SOME ADS FOR THE BOOK FEATURE A VERBAL EX-CHANGE VIA WORD BALLOONS BE-TWEEN SPIDER-MAN AND THE TORCH, WHILE IN FACT THE COPIES THAT ARRIVED AT THE NATION'S NEWSDEAL-ERS HAD NO SUCH VERBAL SPARRING...

IN THE CASE OF FF ANNUAL, WE HAVE TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SCENES DEPICTED ON THE TWO VERSIONS. WHAT CAUSED THEM TO JUNK THE ORIGIN-AL IN FAVOR OF THE ONE THAT SAW PRINT?

I CAN ONLY VENTURE AN EDUCATED GUESS, YOU UNDERSTAND...

...BUT BACK IN THOSE DAYS, THE SUB-MARINER SEEMED, VERY MUCH TO BE A PET CHARACTER OF STAN LEE'S. HERE THEN WAS THE CULMINATION OF OVER A YEAR'S WORTH OF PLOTTING -- NAMOR FINALLY LOCATES HIS LONG LOST RACE! ON THE ORIGINAL COVER, NAMOR AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR SHARE THE SPACE FAIRLY EQUALLY. BUT ON THE REVISED COVER, THE SUB-MARINER IS CLEARLY THE FOCAL POINT, EMPHASIZED BY THE CROWN UPON HIS HEAD. IRONICALLY, THE FF PLAY SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH BANANAS ON THE COVER OF THEIR OWN ANNUAL...

OH, AND BY THE WAY -- YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THAT THE WORD "ANNUAL" IS SOMEWHAT ASKEW ON THE ORIGINAL COVER. FOR HISTORICAL ACCURACY, I REPRO-DUCED IT AS I SAW IT. SOMEBODY IN MARVEL'S PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT WAS DRUNK, NOT ME!!

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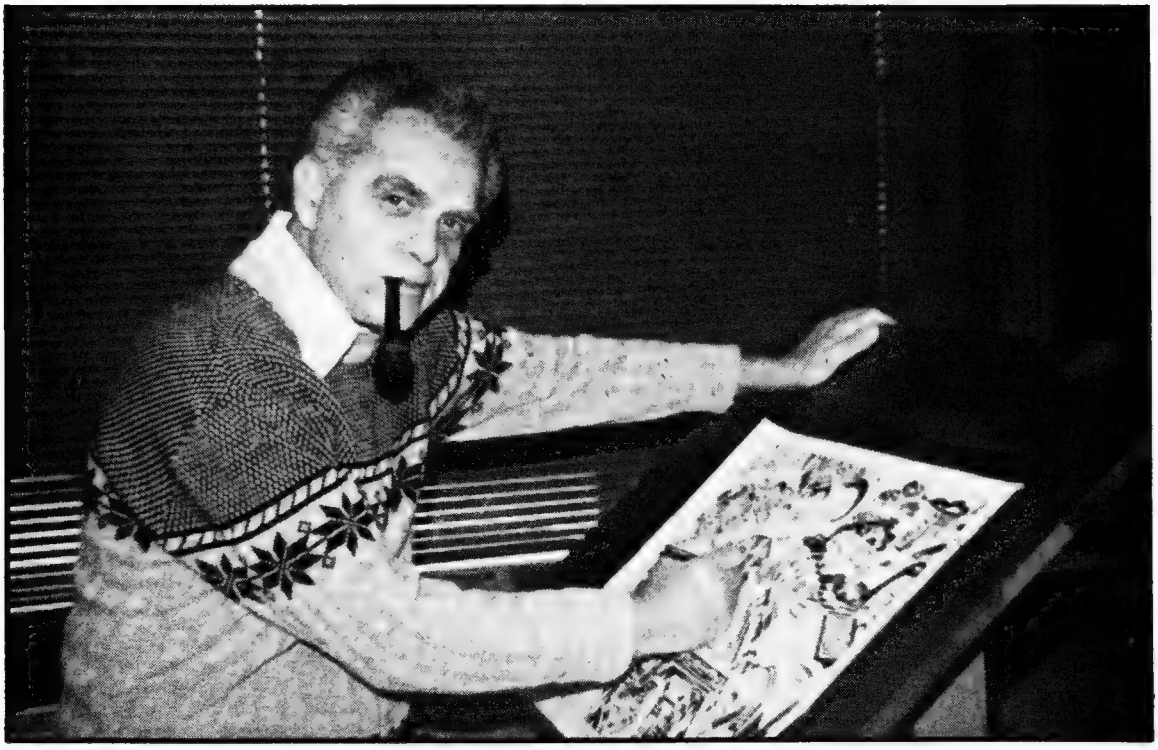
Questions and Answers With Jack Kirby, Version Two



by Roger Green

Back in September, I sent several questions to Jack Kirby regarding his tenure on the Fantastic Four. *These questions addressed what are considered to some of the most significant events in comics, including the formation of the FF, the appearance of Dr. Doom, the Inhumans, the Black Panther, Galactus, the Silver Surfer, Warlock, Franklin Richards, and the reappearance of the Sub-Mariner, and Jack's participation in their creation.*

When I called him in October to check on his progress, he told me that he could not address these issues. He said, "The past is past—the past means nothing to me and the future even less." Regarding Marvel, he stated that he's "left it behind; I'd rather not go into it."

He noted that he doesn't know any of the current Marvel artists or writers and that he hasn't seen the Fantastic Four *comic lately, except one. Therefore, he felt that he could not comment on these areas, even if he were so inclined.*

I asked him about Fantastic Four *236, the 20th anniversary issue, in which a 14-page story, modified from a Saturday morning DePatie-Freleng cartoon of the Fantastic Four with storyboards by Jack, appeared. The story, "The Challenge of Dr. Doom," was adapted from* Fantastic Four *5, "Prisoners of Dr. Doom" by Lee and Kirby (of course), but with the now-extinct Herbie the Robot replacing the Human Torch for contractual reasons.*

Jack said, "I had nothing to do with it. Some friend of John Byrne's called and asked if I would do something for the 20th anniversary issue. I said no. So they [Marvel] took the roughs I did for DePatie and put six [actually 10] inkers on it. I didn't know anything about it until the goddamn thing was published." He received a copy from a friend who thought he had worked on it. Jack received no additional renumeration for the reuse of the storyboards, either from Marvel or DePatie-Freleng, he said.

Jack did agree to respond to some questions regarding his more contemporary projects. The only question carried over from the first series of questions concerns inkers.

Jack said, "I'm squeezing the answers in between a variety of projects on my own, but I promise you lucidity and honesty and you can't get more if you go to a neighborhood guru."

ROGER GREEN: What was the inspiration for Captain Victory? Did you create it specifically for Pacific Comics or was it an idea that you had been working on for some time?

JACK KIRBY: Captain Victory is a premise that came to me when I first saw [Steven] Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. I felt that the vision of a UFO landing was too idealistic and demanded [to be shown] what I felt would really happen in case of such an event.

RG: Without giving the whole storyline away, can you tell me in which direction Captain Victory will be going? Will you be introducing new characters, or are you going to let the readers get more information on the Captain, Major Klavus, Orca, Tarin, Mister Mind and Loveleen?

JK: Like anything I've created in the past—which is almost every comic you've ever read—the storyline must of necessity be widened to allow for conflict and consequences and the addition of characters. This is the story of an invasion, a clash of cultures, and it can't

be sustained with one or two characters.

RG: Besides Neal Adams's *Ms. Mystic* in issue 3, are any other backup features planned in *Captain Victory*?

JK: Yes. I'm working on a five-page feature which will be added to the magazine. The lead character is original and I know he'll work well with the fans.*

RG: Neither issues 1 nor 2 of *Captain Victory* have a two-page spread on pages 2 and 3, which had been a Kirby tradition. Was this change intentional or circumstantial?

JK: The lack of a two-page spread on pages 2 and 3 in the first two issues were purely circumstantial. *Captain Victory* was originally a 50-page book which, in agreement with Pacific Comics, was split into two separate issues of lesser pages. Thus, the change in the placement of the double spreads.

RG: How did you get involved with *Destroyer Duck*—did Steve Gerber contact you or did you contact him?

JK: I got involved with *Destroyer Duck* because I wanted to. I'd like to see comic publishing move closer to legitimate publishing, where artists and writers are more than just coolies.

RG: What are your feelings about the lawsuit which Gerber has instituted against Marvel regarding the right to own Howard the Duck specifically, and in general, a creator's right to his or her own creation?

JK: That Steve Gerber created Howard the Duck is self-evident. Marvel not only owes him gratitude in lieu of profits made, but potential profits [as well]. The trouble is that "Marvel wants it all." It worked that way in the past. But I'd like to see a more equitable future where deals can be worked out to benefit all who work for sales.

RG: Are you doing any animation work? If so, what characters are involved and through which animation studio are you working?

JK: I work with Ruby and Spears, a great animation outfit of fine, competent people who turn out *Thundarr the Barbarian*, *Goldie Gold* and many other enjoyable features. You can catch them early any Saturday morning on TV.** I do concepts, character design, vehicle design and work as a producer-consultant.

*The *Goozlebobber* started in *Captain Victory* 4.

**The *Goldie Gold and Action Jack* and *Thundarr* half-hour cartoon series are broadcast Saturday mornings on ABC-TV at 11 A.M. and 11:30 A.M. (ET), respectively.

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4

RG: Which inkers do you like to work with? Do you prefer to ink your own work?

JK: I'll work with any good, professional inker. However, I don't deny that any inker in the tradition of Wally Wood*** and Mike Royer and one with a great potential like Mike Thibideaux (who inks my present work) would make any penciller proud to look at his published works.

RG: Are there any other projects either through Pacific or others which you are working on which haven't been announced yet?

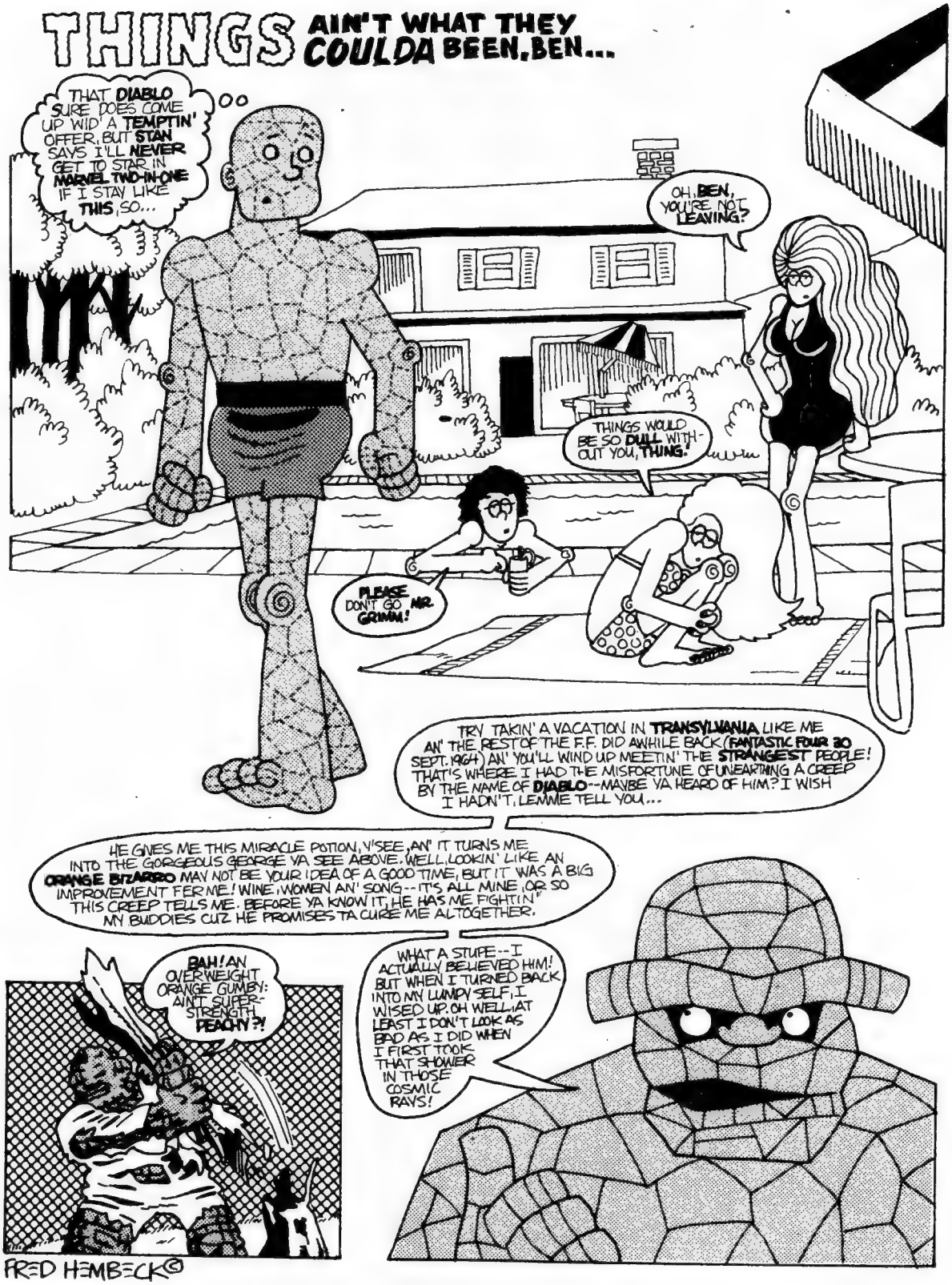
JK: I'm continually contemplating new things. Everybody does. Life demands it and one must respond.

RG: Is the creative process becoming easier or more difficult for you? Do you find that comics can still be "fun" for you?

JK: The creative process is always fun. I could write something on a brick wall with chalk that would send you into a howling panic. Despite that temptation, I'm looking forward to less limited options and hope to see them come to fruition. They'll be powerful and they'll move you to remember them in a classic sense.

That does it, I imagine. I want to thank you for your patience and hope that your own creative juices lead you to the kind places you'd enjoy. ■

***Since this questionnaire was completed, Wallace Wood (b. 1927) died late in 1981 by his own hands. Woody, as he was called by his friends, worked on *Challengers of the Unknown* and *Skymasters* with Jack Kirby. He also worked on the original *Mad* and other ECs, the *Spirit*, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, *witzend*, *Sally Forth*, *Cannon*, and most recently, *Bang*, among many others. For Marvel, he did *Daredevil* when the character's costume changed from yellow to red. (See *The Daredevil Chronicles*.)


THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY COULDA BEEN, BEN...
THAT DIABLO SURE DOES COME UP WID' A TEMPTIN' OFFER, BUT STAN SAYS I'LL NEVER GET TO STAR IN MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE IF I STAY LIKE THIS, SO...
OH, BEN, YOU'RE NOT LEAVING?
THINGS WOULD BE SO DULL WITHOUT YOU, THING.
PLEASE DON'T GO MR. GRIMM!
TRY TAKIN' A VACATION IN TRANSYLVANIA LIKE ME AN' THE REST OF THE F.F. DID AWHILE BACK (FANTASTIC FOUR 30 SEPT. 1964) AN' YOU'LL WIND UP MEETIN' THE STRANGEST PEOPLE! THAT'S WHERE I HAD THE MISFORTUNE OF UNEARTHING A CREEP BY THE NAME OF DIABLO--MAYBE YA HEARD OF HIM? I WISH I HADN'T. LEMME TELL YOU...
HE GIVES ME THIS MIRACLE POTION, Y'SEE, AN' IT TURNS ME INTO THE GORGEOUS GEORGE YA SEE ABOVE. WELL, LOOKIN' LIKE AN ORANGE BIZARRO MAY NOT BE YOUR IDEA OF A GOOD TIME, BUT IT WAS A BIG IMPROVEMENT FER ME! WINE, WOMEN AN' SONG--IT'S ALL MINE, OR SO THIS CREEP TELLS ME. BEFORE YA KNOW IT, HE HAS ME FIGHTIN' MY BUDDIES CUZ HE PROMISES TA CURE ME ALTOGETHER.
BAH! AN OVERWEIGHT ORANGE GUMBY: AIN'T SUPER-STRENGTH PEACHY?!
WHAT A STUPE--I ACTUALLY BELIEVED HIM! BUT WHEN I TURNED BACK INTO MY LUMPY SELF, I WISED UP. OH WELL, AT LEAST I DON'T LOOK AS BAD AS I DID WHEN I FIRST TOOK THAT SHOWER IN THOSE COSMIC RAYS!
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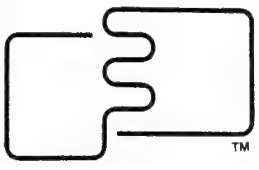

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After the Wedding: Ambiguity and an Expanding Universe

by Steve Webb

By the time Reed Richards married Susan Storm in the 1965 *Fantastic Four Annual* (number 3), the Lee-Kirby team had created 19 villains to fight the superhero team—not counting the Hulk and Sub-Mariner and numerous drones, apes and androids. The wedding story itself was a slugfest, with 25 Marvel villains—eight of the above 19 and an assortment of characters from other magazines.

Lee and Kirby had covered personal vengeance, megalomania, material greed and wanton bigotry. In defeating Diablo twice and Dr. Doom seven times, the FF had appeared to triumph over something akin to ultimate evil. What was left to do?

The issues following the wedding suggest the answer was to branch out, refine the continued-story format of the Frightful Four battles and create new conflicts for the heroes to solve. Much of what made *Fantastic Four* deserve its slogan, "the world's greatest comic magazine," occurred during the two year period covering issues 44-67 and annuals 3-5, inclusive.

For a full year, the adversaries the group encountered would eventually become friends, creating a conceptual ambiguity that had been rare in comics before. That ambiguity paralleled nicely with the growing protest at that time against the Vietnam War, and the growing distrust (apparently reflected among some members of the Marvel bullpen) for the pop youth culture Marvel was trying so hard to be part of.

The Marvel universe expanded further with the addition of new characters such as Wyatt Wingfoot and the Black Panther, a whole race of superpowered "Inhumans," a godlike eater of planets named Galactus with his sterling herald the Silver Surfer, a negative universe first called sub-space and later called the Negative Zone, a galaxy inhabited by human-like persons called the Kree, and an underground laboratory where power-mad scientists were creating an artificial man who would later be known as Adam Warlock.

It started innocently enough. Three members of the Frightful Four had pasts—the Wizard and the Trapster fighting the Human Torch, and the Sandman fighting Spiderman. The fourth, Medusa, remained a mystery when she escaped capture in issue 43. Lee and Kirby's way to explain her, admittedly, made things more complicated.

They introduced a new strong-man character, Gorgon, who stomped around New York City searching for Medusa. His powers were apparently related to sonic shock waves but basically consisted of super-strength. Johnny Storm stumbled upon Gorgon while driving around, and the fight that ensued led to Medusa and the ubiquitous android Dragon Man.

All that happened in issue 44, and by issue 47 the Torch had discovered Crystal, a teen-aged girl whose power was control over the elements. Thinking he too was an Inhuman, she took him to meet a dog with the power of teleportation, Lockjaw, an exaggerated martial artist named Karnak, a mysteriously cloaked person with green scales, Triton, and a silent leader-figure, Black Bolt. The FF would eventually travel in the Inhumans' Great Refuge and help Black Bolt and friends fight his brother Maximus, who had usurped Black Bolt's throne over the Inhumans.

The story is abound with contradictions. Triton tells Mr. Fantastic at one point that the small group of Inhumans "have hidden from the Seeker for years," and the Seeker—a police officer of sorts rounding up all who escape the Great Refuge, calls the group one of the Inhumans' oldest families. But Gorgon first appears in the Seeker's role, trying to bring Medusa back to the fold. He apologizes to her when he finds Maximus desired her return so he could force her to marry him.

And there is Black Bolt's speechlessness. In issue 47, Maximus referred to it as an "accident" in which his brother lost that power. Others implied that Maximus caused the accident. But in later issues, and in the origin series that appeared at the back of *Thor* in 1967, Black Bolt's speechlessness was intrinsically linked to his super-strength and other powers.

Despite these inconsistencies, the first major Inhumans story captivated readers. It brought out more of the science fiction element in the *Fantastic Four* form-

IT'S AHMA!! IN HIS COCOON FORM!!
WE THOUGHT HE WOULD TAKE LIFE THIS WAY-- THO WE WERE NEVER CERTAIN!!
BUT--IT'S TOO SOON!! HE SHOULDN'T HAVE BROKEN FREE OF THE LIFE TANK TILL WE WERE READY!
GET BACK, GIRL! QUICKLY--BEFORE HE ENTERS THE FINAL PHASE--!!
NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! HE'S WEAK-- HE'S TERRIBLY ILL!!
YOU'RE A DOCTOR!! YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM LIKE THIS--!! HE NEEDS HELP!

Steve Webb, who wrote "X-Men: Roth and Thomas" for The X-Men Chronicles *is a reporter for the (Albany, NY)* Knickerbocker News.

ula, and coincided with a new phase in Kirby's artwork. The story's resolution, in which Maximus trapped himself and his fellow Inhumans inside a "negative zone" barrier, also provided one of several subplots to dominate the next year of issues.

Just after returning to New York, the FF would encounter another ambiguous adversary—the world eater Galactus, whom the script indicated was beyond good and evil and was pictured as almost godlike. His story is related to that of his then-herald the Silver Surfer and will be saved for a later date.

Reed Richards's research on the newly discovered sub-space (an element in the Galactus story and later renamed the Negative Zone) and Ben Grimm's latest identity crisis formed the seed for issue 51, a tale this writer considers the best single issue in FF history. The Thing was the villain in "This Man, This Monster," although Ben Grimm was not the Thing. Grimm's powers and appearance were technologically stolen by a scientist jealous of Richards's wealth. That jealousy and Richards's inability to trust his own instincts about the bogus Thing led to a dramatic climax in the negative zone.

By this time, Johnny Storm had enrolled at Metro College and met his roommate, Wyatt Wingfoot. His academic career would quickly go by the wayside, leaving two subplots from college unresolved. The reason he left, to search for a means to break the barrier imprisoning the Inhumans (including the elemental Crystal, for whom he was quite smitten) would form another subplot.

The Black Panther appeared to be the villain in issue 52, where he was pictured as the ruler of a bizarre African nation mixing futuristic technology with old tribal customs. He would explain in the next issue he instigated their fight to test his skills before battling the real villain—Klaw, the Master of Sound. The FF would join him in that fight, but a more important result than their victory would be the addition of the Panther and Wakanda to the already heavy arsenal of supporting characters and scenarios.

Another character, Prester John from the mythical land of Avalon, is matched against the hot-headed Torch in issue 54, and the Torch should really be counted as the villain in the tale. But the next major introduction of new characters would come almost a year later with the Kree. This advanced civilization from another galaxy was only hinted at at first, through the discovery of a robot sentry and later appearance of a Kree law-enforcement type called Ronan who came to Earth to punish the FF for destroying the sentry. Later, the Kree would provide Marvel readers with periodic wars with the Skrull galaxy (introduced in issue 2), featuring the superhero Captain Marvel, among others.

But the initial Kree stories in issues 64 and 65 were modest, interesting mostly because of a subplot leading Ben Grimm's girlfriend, the blind sculptress Alicia Masters, into some otherworldly laboratory. Mad scientists—that such adversaries would appear in the *Fantastic Four* by now was not novelty—had created a near-perfect form of synthetic life, and while they battled the FF, Alicia would confront the being just before it emerged from a human-sized cocoon.

The resulting being was quite human-like, a mixture of the Silver Surfer and the original Human Torch—who had been revived in annual 4 as an android dupe of the Mad Thinker, giving the team another ambiguous foe. Marvel readers would later know the being who emerged from the cocoon as Adam Warlock.

Lee and Kirby took a rest after that—if writing and drawing battles with the Mad Thinker's androids, Galactus, Dr. Doom and a new villain Psychoman could be called a rest. But in that two-year period, much of Marvel's identity for the next 10 years would be established. Popular as they were, the Inhumans, Warlock, and Silver Surfer wouldn't quite catch on in their own magazines, but they are still important parts of numerous Marvel comics and the Marvel mythos. ■

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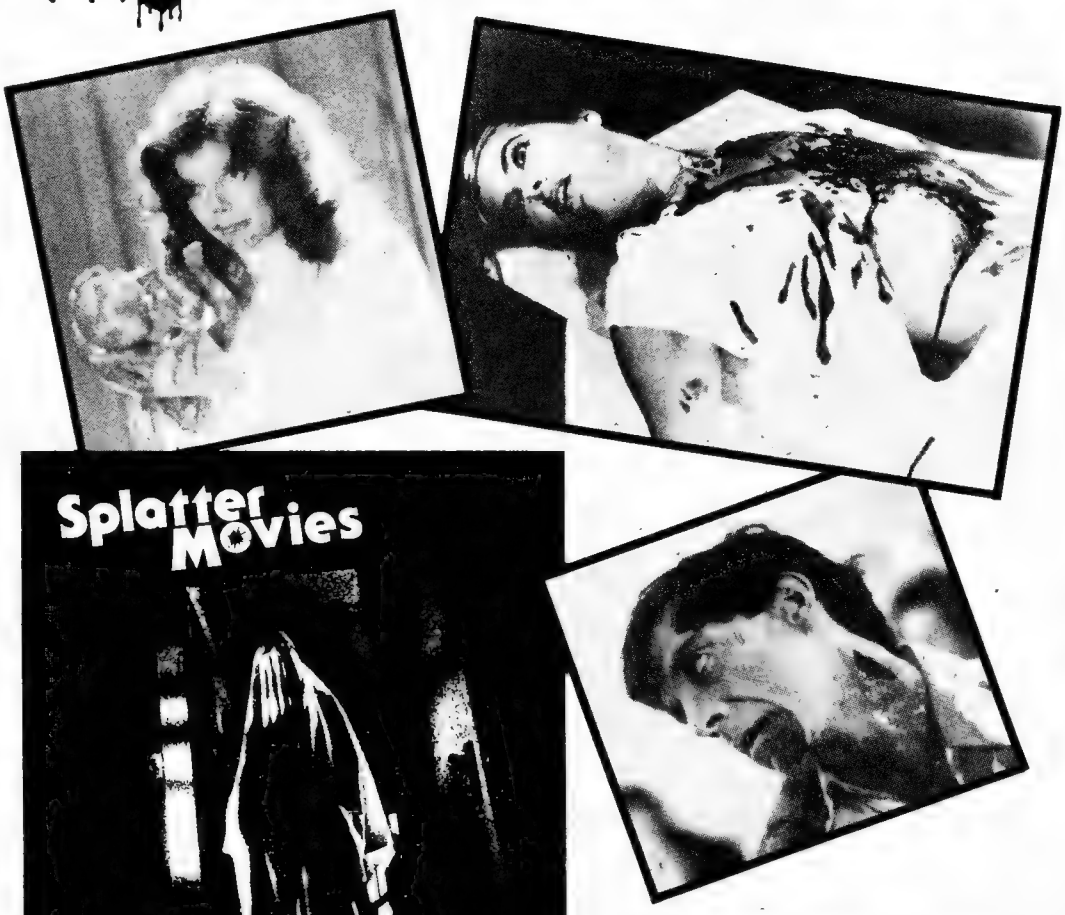

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The Animated Adventures of The Fantastic Four

by Jim Korkis

"The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" could have become "The World's Greatest Animated Television Series" but it didn't. The special magic of the Fantastic Four has not yet been mastered by the art of the animator despite several attempts.

The history of those attempts is fascinating. Back in 1965, no animated superheroes flew across the Saturday morning television screen. However, the next year changed that situation. In September 1966, a new company named Filmation premiered its first television series, *The New Adventures of Superman*. Filmation had been struggling to produce an animated sequel of *The Wizard of Oz* but, failing to find enough financing for that project, tried to keep the company operating by producing the *Superman* series. That decision saved the company. The ratings were so high on that series that the format was expanded to include the adventures of Aquaman and later, Batman. Filmation went on to become one of the major producers of Saturday morning television animation.

In fact, Filmation's success was so great that the following year almost a dozen new superheroes filled the Saturday morning hours, introducing the relatively new Marvel creations to a large part of the American public. The story of how the Fantastic Four finally made it to TV is far more complicated that someone might suspect. The FF's first animated adventure didn't even feature the FF, thanks to Grantray-Lawrence.

Grantray-Lawrence is infamous. In 1954, Robert *Lawrence* joined with animators *Grant* Simmons and *Ray* Patterson to form an animation company but their first big break came in 1966 when they decided to produce *The Marvel Superhero Cartoons* based on the adventures of Captain America, Iron Man, Hulk, Thor and Sub-Mariner. They made 13 half-hour shows (an actual total of 39 cartoons since three episodes were shown each half-hour) that were via syndication on 40 stations in 14 foreign countries.

This company is infamous because its limited animation was truly limited. Most of the animation drawings were taken directly from the Marvel comic books themselves. Offset copies of the artwork were made, word balloons and captions were whited out and backgrounds were deleted or changed. Sometimes parts of hands or heads had to be added by the animators because they were cut off in the original comic panel. Then the picture would be jiggled or the camera would zoom in and the illusion of movement was supposedly created.

Why is this of interest to Fantastic Four fans?

Two of the Sub-Mariner half-hour adventures were based on *Fantastic Four* stories. But since Grantray-Lawrence didn't have the rights to use the FF in this series, they had to substitute the X-Men for the fabulous foursome. They used part of the first *Fantastic Four Annual* for the episode entitled "The Unveiling." Later, they used parts of *Fantastic Four* 6 ("Captives of the Deadly Duo") and *Fantastic Four Annual* 3 ("Bedlam at the Baxter Building") to create three episodes: *Dr. Doom's Day*, *The Doomed Allegiance* and *Tug of Death*.

Jim Korkis is an animation historian who writes frequent columns for The Comics Journal, The Comics Reader *and* Animania. *He is currently writing a book on television animation and this article is an edited version of one of those chapters.*

It would take almost a year before the FF finally appeared in their own stories as animated stars.

September of 1967 was the season of the superhero. Super President, Birdman, the Herculoids and even Atom Ant fought for animated justice on Saturday mornings. The success the previous season of *Superman* had convinced the networks that superheroes were what the public wanted. Imitation is the sincerest form of television. At the time, Friz Freleng of DePatie-Freleng sarcastically proclaimed, "You could animate a Superman series on toilet paper and the networks would buy it." There were some advantages to using superheroes: it is easier to animate a person flying rather than a person walking and stories could be filled with endless flight of weird villains in place of coherent plots.

Hanna-Barbera is perhaps the best known television animation studio. Its early limited animation work on *Huckleberry Hound* and *Yogi Bear* pioneered the field of inexpensive, made for television animation. By 1967, Hanna-Barbera was "King of Saturday Morning" but it was looking for new conquests. Wanting to get away from the funny animals and work on more realistic figures, H-B concentrated a lot of its resources and hopes on the *Johnny Quest* series. While today the pulpish action adventure of *Johnny Quest* is appreciated, at the time it was regarded as a failure, too shallow to compete in the prime time arena and too elaborate for Saturday morning. Later Hanna-Barbera series had to pay the price for that dubious "failure." Instead of plots rich with detail and added shading and care in the animation layout, H-B's human characters reverted to the simplicity of its humor work: simple dialog, bright colors and a minimum of detail.

It was at this point that H-B obtained the rights to animate the Fantastic Four. When it premiered in September 1967 on ABC, Hanna-Barbera's version of the fabulous foursome was not greeted with much enthusiasm by Marvelites. One fan reviewer described it as having "no humor; dialog is very simple, thus missing one of Marvel's most prominent commodities. A dozen commercials later, it's over . . . not the kind of thing we'll get up this early for again." That sentiment was echoed by most of the rest of the FF's fans.

That first episode featured a watered down version of *Fantastic Four* 30 where Diablo uses his potions to cause trouble for Reed and company. Most of the plot was there but it was as if it had been adapted for a children's coloring book; all the subtle interplay between characters was eliminated in favor of a problem that could be solved by punching something. The show was not much different from the other H-B shows of the same time and the FF acted and reacted no differently than the Mighty Mightor.

Gerald Mohr, a minor leading man of the 1950s, was the voice of Reed Richards. Jo Ann Pflug (pre-*M*A*S*H*) was Sue and Jack Flounders was Johnny Storm. Paul Frees, whose voice work credits include everything from the Rice Krispies elves to Boris Badinov, was the Thing. Character design was credited to Alex Toth, a popular comic book artist who would later design *Superfriends* for Hanna-Barbera. Story credit for the series was given to Jack Hanrahan and Phil Hahn.

The episodes were a mixture of adaptations from the

comics and original stories. One adaptation "Duel in the Depths" was based on *Fantastic Four* 33 ("Side by Side With the Sub-Mariner") but because Grantray-Lawrence still had the rights to the character of the Sub-Mariner, Prince Namor of Atlantis was transformed into Prince Triton of Pacifica. Strangely, Lady Dorma and Attuma retained their same names in both the Hanna-Barbera and Grantray-Lawrence versions of the Sub-Mariner adventures. One of the more interesting original stories was "The Terrible Tribunal." The Tribunal was composed of Klaw, Molecule Man and Blastaar who have chosen to put on trial all those "who commit crimes against evil." Surprisingly, their enforcer robots look a lot like the Cylon warriors from *Battlestar Galactica*. (Their dialog even consists of statements like "As you command, E-1.") We also learn in this episode that Reed and Sue sleep in the same room but in separate beds!

Fortunately, for those who want to see H-B's version of the FF, the opportunity still exists. Two years ago, H-B packaged four of their series together for syndication in a program entitled *Hanna-Barbera's World of Super Adventure*. Besides the FF, the show features the exploits of the Herculoids, the Impossibles, Frankenstein Jr., Shazzan, Space Ghost and Mightor. Local stations often purchase such packages to run early in the morning or late in the afternoons for school-aged children.

After Hanna-Barbera's efforts, it took over 10 years for the FF to once again have the chance to become animated stars.

In 1963, Warner Brothers closed down their cartoon department and leased the space to ex-Warner cartoon director Friz Freleng and his partner, Dave DePatie who was the son of a Warner executive. They formed DePatie-Freleng and found early success when they created the Pink Panther character for the title sequence of the Blake Edwards's movie. The character proved so popular that DePatie-Freleng moved off the Warners lot into a new studio where they began invading the television market with *Waldo Kitty*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Here Comes the Grump* and other equally memorable efforts.

By the late 70s, Marvel was trying to market its characters. Universal Studios had taken an option to several of the Marvel properties and later used them to develop several pilots and series for television. The rumor in fandom at the time was that Marvel was going to buy an animation studio and produce their own animated series. Most people felt that rumor had no basis in fact when it was announced that DePatie-Freleng would produce for NBC a new Saturday morning show featuring the adventures of the Fantastic Four. The show was set to premiere in September 1978.

Hopes were raised high with the announcement of the people connected with the project. Jack Kirby, co-creator of the FF, was to be responsible for the character designs and the storyboards. Kirby was no stranger to animation, having worked as an in-betweener at the old Fleischer studios in New York when they were animating the classic *Popeye* cartoons. Scripts for the series were to be provided by Stan Lee, the other co-creator of the FF, and Roy Thomas, the top scripter at Marvel whose love and respect for the FF was well known. What could possible go wrong? Apparently a lot since the series lasted almost as long as Hanna-Barbera's attempt.

One of the problems was the fact that it was not the Fantastic *Four*; it was the Fantastic *Three* Plus One. That extra one was a "cute" robot taking the place of Johnny Storm because the character of the Human Torch was one of the properties optioned by Universal so it was no longer available for use. (At the time, the fear was also expressed that children would try to imitate the Torch by setting themselves on fire.) In the Torch's place was a robot named "Herbie." (Kirby's original character design labeled the character "Z-Z-1-2-3.") The success of *Star Wars* had made cute robots the latest "fad" to be incorporated into any remotely science fiction oriented project. The robot was supposed to rile Ben Grimm the same way the Torch did in the earlier FF stories but that special magic chemistry just wasn't recaptured. DePatie-Freleng were as guilty of presenting simplified versions of the FF as Hanna-Barbera. The first episode, written by Lee himself, was a retelling of the "Infant Terrible" story from *Fantastic Four* 24 but it lacked the emotional involvement of its four-color inspiration. In fact, this series was so similar to the H-B effort that one of the directors was Brad Case who had previously worked at H-B.

For the record, Mike Road was the voice of Reed; Ginny Tyler did Sue; and Ted Cassidy, perhaps best known for his portrayal of Lurch on *The Addams Family*, played the Thing. Dick Tufel did the narration. The following year, DePatie-Freleng would try again to recapture the Marvel magic with their version of Spider-woman.

One of the strangest incarnations of the FF was produced in 1979. Hanna-Barbera didn't have much success with the Fantastic *Three* and DePatie-Freleng had the same terrible luck with the Fantastic *Three* so Hanna-Barbera decided to try again with the Fantastic *One. Fred and Barney Meet the Thing* popped onto TV in September 1979. The title was very misleading because Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble didn't actually meet the Thing except in the title credits and some comedy blackouts. (During this time, the late Tex Avery was hired by Hanna-Barbera as a "trouble-shooter" and one of his first jobs was to "punch up" the gags on the Thing. Exactly how much he contributed is unknown.) At the time, fandom, knowing that Jack Kirby was now working in animation, was ready to blame Jack for the changes in Benjamin Grimm, but he was not at fault. A staff producer came up with the change of converting college graduate Benjamin Grimm into a teen-ager named Benji Grimm. Benji had a magic ring (its origin or how Benji got it were explained in the series) that enabled giant orange boulders to hurtle toward him and cling to his body, thus transforming him into the Thing.

Benji was also given a sister and the previously unseen Yancy Street Gang became motorcycle clowns. The plots usually revolved around the Thing outwitting the motorcyclists. The whole series seemed like a strange version of the *Archie* show. Doug Wildey did some early production work on the show.

Like the previous attempts, this version barely lasted one season and the Thing was quickly replaced by Al Capp's *Shmoo*. Since that time, Friz Freleng returned to Warner Brothers and the DePatie-Freleng studio was converted to Marvel Productions. Dave DePatie is still the president but Stan Lee is the creative head of the studio. Many projects have been announced, including several projects with Japan's top animation studio TOEI. Will the new company tackle the challenge of animating the Fantastic Four? Will "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" finally become "The World's Greatest Animated Series?" Stay tuned. ■

Interview:
Len Wein and Marv Wolfman

by Jay Zilber

Writer Jay Zilber conducted the following interview with Len Wein and Marv Wolfman in December of 1981.

JAY ZILBER: What did it mean to you to be writing "The World's Greatest Comics Magazine?" Was it something you always wanted to do, or was it thrust upon you by chance?

LEN WEIN: It was thrust upon me by chance. I was the next in the logical order . . .

JAY: Roy Thomas had been writing the book for a time, and the there were a couple of Bill Mantlo fill-in issues, and then . . .

LEN: . . . me. I was the logical choice to replace Roy at the time. Gerry [Conway] was then over at DC—as I recall, the sequence of FF writers was Stan, Roy, Gerry, Roy, me, and Marv. Since Gerry was not around at the time, and since I was doing, at that point, *Spider-Man*, *Hulk* and *Thor*, it seemed like it was the logical addition to the triumvirate of "biggie" titles, the old Stan Lee titles. I didn't last very long though . . . I did about a half-dozen issues.

MARV WOLFMAN: And when Len got off the book, I had wanted it, because I like the Fantastic Four.

LEN: Oh, I liked them too, by the way. I didn't drop the book for lack of enjoying the characters. I left the company, as I recall.

JAY: Those were the circumstances for both of you—when Len left the book, you left the company.

MARV: No, I had actually quit the book before I left the company. I had said I would quit FF at a certain issue, before I even knew I was leaving Marvel. It just turned out that the issue I said I would leave on was at the same time I would have left anyway. I took on the assignment because Len got off, and it was a book I really wanted to write. I was given *FF* and *Spider-Man* at the same time.

JAY: What were you trying to accomplish during each of your respective tenures on the book? Were you trying to return to the Lee-Kirby roots, or to be faithful to what had just preceded you, or to develop your own interpretations of the characters?

LEN: Yes.

MARV: Yes, that's actually a correct answer. I think we all wanted to go back to what Stan had done—because he had already done it!—but to the same concept . . .

LEN: . . . the feel . . .

MARV: . . . The feel that he was trying to get through, as opposed to just mimmicking what he was doing (which is currently what's happening in the book). It was that sort of a desire—and also to go into other directions. You couldn't do *another* Dr. Doom story. You couldn't do just another Galactus story. If you were to use those characters, you had to do something totally different with them.

LEN: That's why I was trying to infuse a little bit of cynicism, by breaking them up—in what turned out to be my last full issue. I wouldn't have been as presumptuous as that, to break up the group and leave someone else with the loose ends. I had planned almost a year's worth of continuity, where I would have done rotations.

Every issue would have focused on one of the members, while the others would be in subplots, which would in turn build until they all came back together in a major story a year or so later.

JAY: Do you think you having had control over *Fantastic Four* as both writer and editor was beneficial to what you were trying to do? How do you feel about that system, which has now been dismantled, as opposed to the separate writer/separate editor policy that you have at both DC and Marvel now?

LEN: I may be one of a dying breed, but I *liked* the writer/editor concept. I liked being able to do what I wanted to do without having to explain to somebody else why.

MARV: I find, personally—and this is not always true, but for the most part—that editors, because they have to answer to the company, tend to be very timid about experiments, and about trying something real strange. I didn't really do much on the *Fantastic Four* that would have been considered that way. But certainly some of the stuff I was doing on *Spider-Man* would not have been approved by any editor. It could only have been approved because I decided to do it. The same way, of course, Stan decided to do things that had never been done. He could do it. If he had needed the approval of somebody else, they'd have said, "Well, this has never worked before, this has never . . ."So I tend to feel that writers could be their own editor for ideas. They do need somebody to sound the stuff off of, and to go over the actual

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Jay Zilber is a fan writer and publisher of many credits, and a forms analyst and graphic artist for the New York City Department of Sanitation, believe it or not. Watch for his forthcoming parody of The Comics Journal, *now in the works (and overdue) for more than three years.*

writing—but that could be either a glorified proofreader or an assistant editor who has the power to make corrections.

JAY: Have either or both of you followed *Fantastic Four* since you left the book?

LEN: Haven't missed an issue.

MARV: I missed one. It was one of Doug's [Moench]. I couldn't read it.

LEN: Oh, I'm sorry but he's right. It was possibly the same one.

MARV: With Thor [*FF* 225—RG].

LEN: The second part of the . . . yes!

MARV: Couldn't get past the third page!

LEN: It was the only issue of *Fantastic Four* I could not read. The same one. I wonder what that tells us.

MARV: Doug writes *Master of Kung Fu*, which is one of the top three books up there. There are writers who are just not right for certain strips.

JAY: In general, what is your opinion of what followed your work? How do you feel about what John Byrne is doing now?

LEN: I liked it when Stan did it. My principal complaint—and I may feel stronger about this than Marvin—is that I muchly resent what John is doing, I resent his implication that everything in the past 20 years hasn't happened, that it's still 1964. Everything he's doing is throwbacks to the past. I resent him tampering with so much of the legend. In the space of a couple of months, he's taken care of the Inhumans and moved them to the moon; he's taken care of a couple other things like that. It's really very imperious to suddenly decide to change so much that is integral to the *whole* Marvel mythos, as opposed to just a supporting character in a book.

MARV: He decided to change the visuals on his own, after all this time, when they're not changed in any other book.

LEN: He draws The Watcher the way he was drawn in the first story. Nobody else draws him that way. There's a whole issue The Watcher stars in, where he doesn't look the way he does in any other book.

MARV: John may be right; but unless it's company policy to make the change throughout the whole line, it's really wrong for him to do it alone.

I did really like his triple-sized anniversary issue [*FF* 236]. I thought that was excellently handled. It was certainly not a traditional Marvel plot. It was a John Broome/Gardner Fox plot for DC, the way it was worked. But it was a very good story.

LEN: The actual writing I have no complaints about. As the words scan, I think he's writing it beautifully. Some of the actual writing is wonderful. But a lot of the psychology disturbs me a great deal. I think it was a terrible mistake to introduce Aunt Petunia after 20 years.

MARV: Various things like that.

JAY: But to compare it to a similar situation, isn't what you did in *Fantastic Four* 200, writing off Dr. Doom in the way you did—wasn't that a comparable alteration of the legend?

MARV: No, because I had already told everybody what the sequel was. The entire company knew where I was going to go with that story. Several people had wanted to use Doom, and I told them, "No, you can't do it until I've done this particular story." I had done a very straightforward science story about Doom, how Doom's personality was twofold. The second part of the series, which would have appeared about a year from that point if I had stayed on the book, was about Doom's people taking him down to Mephisto, to play on the sorcery aspect. So I was not writing Doom out of the book. I was just trying to write a type of story that you hadn't seen before in Doom.

JAY: You were both involved in the series of Marvel prose novels, including *Fantastic Four* and others.

MARV: I wrote them, yes.

JAY: And Len was listed as the "packager," which I assume has something to do with editing them.

LEN: No, I got to go around the country in a truck and hand them out to bookstores.

MARV: Basically, they didn't want the term "editor" or "producer" on the books.

LEN: We were going to use "produced and edited by," and they didn't like "produced by," because they wanted people to believe that Marvel had produced them—which, actually, they didn't. Did they?

MARV: No, Marvel had nothing to do with the books.

JAY: How did you approach the problem of translating a concept that was developed for sequential pictures into a format of straight prose, and do you really consider that a valid thing to do?

MARV: My own personal feeling on it was that, when I wrote the Fantastic Four book—which, I'm always quick to say, had to be written really fast for deadline purposes—was basically to write an action/adventure story. I didn't think in terms of it being a comic book. I knew that I had to describe things that you would otherwise see in the artwork, but I treated it as just writing a story. I didn't see it as just trying to make a comic book come to life, or come to prose; I just saw it as writing a prose story featuring comic book characters.

Certain things had to give way. For instance, in my first draft, I spent three chapters doing the origin of the Fantastic Four, as Ben Grimm is explaining it. But when you really analyze the origin of the Fantastic Four, it's dumb! It's incredibly dumb! I can go through it, and probably have you on the floor laughing!

JAY: Go through it, then!

MARV: Okay. First of all, you have this absolutely brilliant scientist who decides he's going to beat the Russians on his own. Now, he goes to the spaceport on the edge of town—there's always spaceports at the edge of small towns like Littleville, or wherever they were in the first story . . .

LEN: . . . Central City. The Flash wasn't around there, apparently.

MARV: Naturally, he tells his girlfriend that he's going to steal a spaceship, even though he was one of the scientists who designed it. He invites his girlfriend, his girlfriend's *kid brother*, and this big lummox of a pilot. Now that's understood that he had to invite Ben, to fly it. Why he invited the girl and the kid on a mission that would technically cause them to be considered spies and traitors, for stealing a rocket ship . . . ?

LEN: If they survived!

MARV: Yes, if they survived! Now, he's a master scientist, but it's Ben Grimm who says, "Hey, you know this thing doesn't have shielding and the cosmic rays are gonna get us." But he says, "Don't worry about it, we're going to fly it up anyway." So, getting past guards—if you remember the shot, they're running past these two guards to the spaceport; every spaceport has those two guards . . .

LEN: . . . they're the famous "stuffed guards." They stand at the gate to frighten you away, but they're not real people.

MARV: Okay, so they somehow get past these two guards in this very well-secured area, and they get into the spaceship. Now, of course, spaceships do not require set-up, priming, using outside computers, any technicians whatsoever—right inside the spaceship, they can blow it up!

LEN: Well, in 1961, they used to be able to shake a lot of seltzer at the bottom of the ship . . .

MARV: So they shoot off into space, and Ben says, "You know, we have these cosmic rays," again. This is the second time he mentions it. Reed says, "No problem," as the cosmic rays start shooting at him. Why he built a spaceship that would not be shielded against cosmic rays, I don't know. But, okay, this is only the most intelligent person on Earth, as the story goes.

They land. It crashes. Somehow, they survive. Nobody comes to rescue them, nobody has spotted them during this entire time.

Let me see if I can get the order they discovered their powers correctly. Sue turns invisible. Okay, we understand she can turn invisible. Later on, of course, we learn she has to think about it, but there she must have been thinking about turning invisible. Johnny flames on and flies. Now, the first thing I would do if I had suddenly ignited would *not* be to fly. I would not ordinarily say, "Well, I ought to jump upwards," and attempt to fly.

LEN: You'd roll around on the ground trying to put the flame out!

MARV: And Ben becomes the monster. Now, the first thing he thinks of—not yet even knowing what his powers are—is to lift up a tree and attack Reed Richards. A normal human being would *naturally* think, "Well, I can lift up a tree!" But of course, Ben lifts up a tree. And of course, Reed stretches.

None of this works! So I took three chapters from my first draft, in which I described all of this in more detail than I've just done now, and knocked it down to one paragraph wherein Ben says something to the effect of, "We went up in space, got hit by cosmic rays, and landed." That was the whole origin, because I was in hysterics as I wrote this stuff, realizing it was really dumb!

Anyway, that's the only type of reworking that I had to do in my head, to take the things that didn't work, and fluff over them. On the other hand, Dr. Doom's origin did work, and it works very well in a pulpy style. That, I did spend the full chapters on. So where it works, you do it, and where it doesn't work, you just get around it. Otherwise, it was an action/adventure story.

JAY: And that was "the world's greatest comics magazine."

MARV: And it was! They were doing things in there that no comic had done previously to that time.

LEN: For about twenty issues, on either side of 50, it was possibly the best comic book ever done.

MARV: The best superhero comic, certainly.

LEN: Oh boy, I mean . . . the Silver Surfer, a throwaway character who wasn't even in the plot . . . !

MARV: The Inhumans, all of that stuff! The book really was the world's greatest comic—for awhile, at least. It hasn't been for a long time, including the time I wrote it, and including part of the time Stan wrote it, near the end.

JAY: While you were doing *FF*, you tied up the plotlines of the discontinued *Nova* book. Was this something you really wanted to do, for the fans who followed *Nova*, or . . .

MARV: No. What I had done was to start a storyline in both books. During the course of the storyline they cancelled *Nova*. The story had already begun in *Fantastic Four*. The idea was to have two separate stories in the two books that the readers wouldn't even realize came together until they met in one issue. When they cancelled *Nova*, I had to rejuggle the entire plotline, which is why it extended so long in *Fantastic Four*. Half the stuff I did in *FF* would have been in *Nova*, and nobody would have said, "Oh, *this* again."

JAY: But do you think there's a danger in wrapping up plotlines of presumably unpopular characters in a popular book and possible damaging the popular book?

MARV: It's hard for me to say. I wouldn't go out of my way to do it normally. With the *FF/Nova* thing, it wasn't a wrapup of a storyline; it had begun on its own. We just did that in the *Teen Titans*, but it made sense because one of the members of the Titans was the adoptive son of one character in, and a member of, the Doom Patrol. But normally I wouldn't go out of my way. There are enough people out there who live and breathe that stuff—let them do it.

JAY: At the time you were writing *Fantastic Four*, you were also writing some or most of the other major Marvel titles. Len, as you mentioned, you were doing *Spider-Man*, *Hulk* and *Thor*, and Marv was also doing *Spider-Man* and *Dracula* at the same time. Was there ever any concern that having the same writer/editor on the major books, in this fashion, tended to reinforce the notion of a house style? Or did you specifically structure the style of each book differently?

LEN: I don't think I wrote the four books very much alike. A house style is subjective. It's not a matter of whether it's good or bad. Every editor has his own style. In fact, just this morning I was talking to my wife about the whole concept of editorial opinion and approach. You could pick up a Julie Schwartz comic—any Schwartz comic, long before there were credits given—and you knew Julie Schwartz had edited that book. Same thing whether with Murray Boltinoff, or Mort Weisinger, or God help us, Bob Kanigher . . . or Stan Lee! They all had their own styles as editors, let alone as writers. Stan simply reinforced his editorial style with his writing, because it was his style, and he was in charge of it all!

MARV: Even Stan did not write the *Fantastic Four* at all the same way he wrote *Spider-Man* or *Thor*.

LEN: The FF was incredibly melodramatic. There was more adjective, more every-panel-life-and-death-ishness to the FF than there ever was for any other Marvel character or any other Marvel book. Every panel was a trauma, every panel was up to its ears in drama. Everyone worried constantly about whether the world was going to come to an end tomorrow or now. That was unlike any other book. I don't think any of us took the same approach with that book that we ever took with any other book.

MARV: You couldn't, because of its nature. Spider-Man had to be realistic, and funny. The Fantastic Four was more cosmic, even if they had "straight" stories.

LEN: Spidey's villains, as a matter of course, are not super-powered; or even the super-powered ones are super-powered at a lower level. In the old days of Stan, there was *never* a super-powered villain, really. They had weaponry, but if you took off the costumes, they were just normal guys. The FF, on the other hand, fought Galactus, who eats *worlds* for a living!

MARV: Every time Stan created a super-powered villain for Spider-Man, they'd only appear once and then be put in another book, like Sandman.

JAY: If the circumstances were different, would you like to be writing *FF* again, now or in the future?

MARV: I wouldn't have minded. As I said, I got off the book on my own because I didn't think I was doing the job I wanted. If I had the choice, I'd prefer getting on *Spider-Man*. That's the only Marvel book I really miss writing.

LEN: Yeah! I didn't necessarily like to give up any of the books I gave up when I left the company. It was a strange set of circumstances that lead me to leave. Unlike any time previously in my career, I had years worth of storylines for every one of those books, which had never happened before. I could have stuck with them for quite a while. ■

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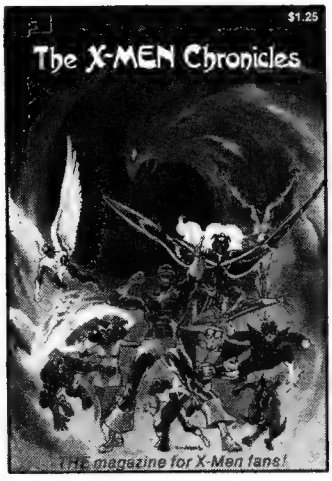

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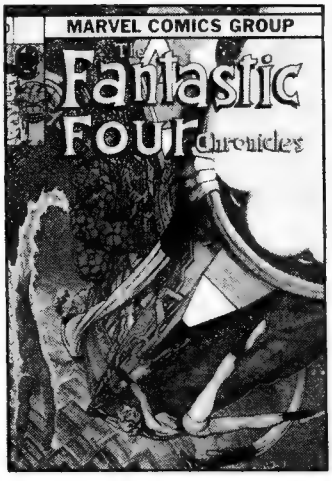

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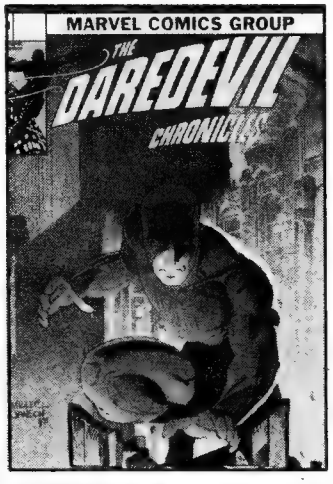

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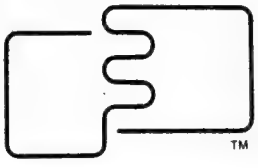

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The Fantastic Four: A Personal Recollection

by John Byrne

A wave of nostalgia. People, places, things I haven't thought about in years. All flooding back in a great, seemingly indecipherable jumble when I try to think back to my first encounter with the *Fantastic Four*.

It was in 1962. I was a few months shy of my 12th birthday. My parents and I were then living in Sherwood Park, one of those horrible pre-planned communities that began springing up across North America in the 1950s and early '60s. A different '60s then. John F. Kennedy was still President, and Camelot was in full vigor. The American Way was still something to look up to. There were no protests on campus, no riots in the ghetto. "Ghetto" was not a word I knew then. A simpler time.

Comic books were simpler. *Superman*, *Batman*, *Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *The Justice League of America*. DC comics, DC Superman as we called them then, held almost complete sway over a limited market.

I had a few friends back then. Always a loner, always introverted, the flashy adventures of those gaudy four-color pages were, to me, an escape from loneliness and poor report cards. Superman could always be counted upon to vanquish the bad guys in eight or nine pages, three times an issue. Batman would defeat the Joker and some bizarre alien menace, yet still find space to grow to giant size or becoming a living negative, all with clockwork regularity. There was a certainty to those comics that I would never, in my youthful innocence, have called "formula."

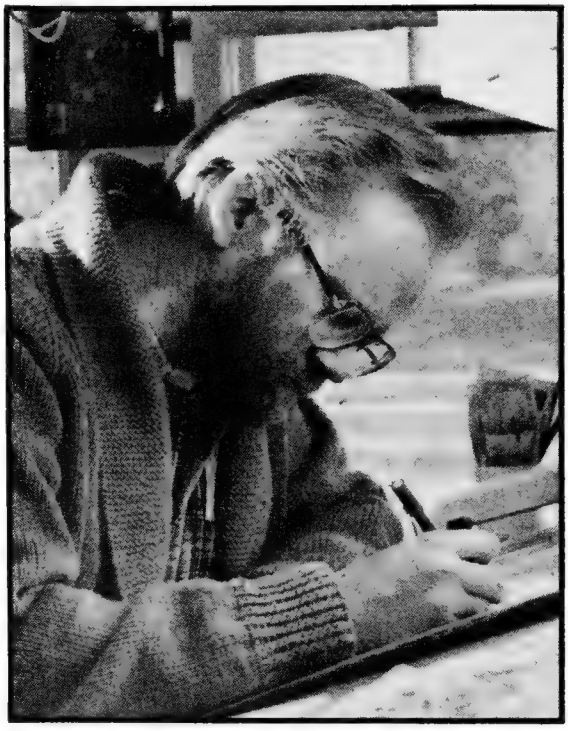
But then, 1962. My mother's parents were visiting from England. On a sojourn into Edmonton, the large city to the south, in a newsstand on Jasper Avenue, "Mike's" by name, I saw my first issue of the *Fantastic Four*. Emphasis on "saw." I didn't pick it up, certainly didn't buy it. My parents restricted the comics I was allowed to buy in those days, and even had they not, there was something . . . alien about that cover. The red carnival letters in a grey field. I don't think I had ever seen the color grey on a comic book cover before. And, strangest of all, the great grey face of Doctor Doom was looming over all.

It was *FF* 5. I had not seen the first four issues, had not even heard of the book before. It was a mystery. And worse, it was not a DC-Superman comic. There was, to my 11-year-old mind, something vaguely blasphemous about superheroes that were not from the same stable that housed *The Justice League of America*. So I didn't buy it. I went home. I went back to my normal life. Or so I thought.

That cover stayed with me. I would not be exaggerating to say it preyed on my mind. A few weeks later my parents were again going into Edmonton. I asked my mother to examine that mysterious comic for me, and, if she deemed it suitable, get it.

Then I spent about four hours crawling the walls. In those days, I was what is called a "sensitive" child. Comics upset me sometimes. Movies certainly did. I had nightmares. Bad ones. And as I awaited my parents return with the verdict, I wondered if that grim grey face would be the sort of thing that would set me off again. I knew I wouldn't be able to resist reading it anyway. I worried.

My parents came home, and there it was. Evidently it had passed my mother's inspection. To this day I have no idea by what criterion she judged a comic book suitable or otherwise, but the *Fantastic Four* clearly met the standard.



I don't remember where I read that comic for the first time. The living room, my bedroom, the bathroom. Many of the sensations and locations surrounding that first adventure into the neophyte Marvel Universe are crystal clear to me, but not that. I wasn't anywhere but inside that comic when I read it for the first time. The artwork, the coloring, the style of writing, and most importantly, the characters themselves, were something totally new. I fell into that comic and, in many respects, never re-emerged.

I must have read and reread it a hundred times before issue 6 came out. The concepts astounded me. Here was a group, like my beloved Justice League, and yet none of the characters had, to my knowledge, their own titles. None of them wore masks, or in any other way disguised their identities. Their headquarters building was right in the middle of New York, in plain sight. On top of a conventional office block, in fact.

And, most astounding of all, they fought amongst themselves. They argued. The Thing got into a fight with the Human Torch on page two of that book. And had to be subdued by Mister Fantastic on page three.

Top it all off with the fact that it was a time-travel story, complete with one of those wonderful twists of I-came-to-find-myself logic, the like of which I had always loved, and I was hooked. All they had to do was reel me in. And they did, with the very next issue. In something else that was almost totally alien to my concept of comic books the villain actually got away at the end of issue 5. I don't think I had seen a bad guy escape before, whether or not his best laid plans had gang aglae. But he was back for the next issue, with someone else I had never encountered before, the Sub-Mariner. There was never any doubt for me that it was the Sub-Mariner, not the Sub-Mareener.

And there was never any doubt that he was a copy of

Aquaman. I had zero knowledge of the Golden Age back then, and it would not be until years later that I learned the imitative process actually ran the other way. But copy or not, the mighty, brooding Prince Namor impressed me every inch as much as had Doctor Doom. And when he, as a supposed villain, turned on his partner to help the Fantastic Four, I was devastated. Had any Superman villain ever done such a thing? Not in my experience.

For a most peculiar reason I did not buy issue 7. I have it now, acquired at somewhat greater expense than its original 12 cents price tag, but back in 1962, I was governed by strange demons. I didn't like the Invisible Girl's face on the cover. That was all. But it stopped me from buying that issue. Clearly I was something less than a completist. Imagine my chagrin a few issues later when that same cover drawing appeared on the letters page. Ah well.

I bought the next one. The Puppet Master. (Still one of my favorite villains, as witness by his appearance in the 20th anniversary issue.) That issue also contains one of my all-time favorite shots, an eloquently simple, backgroundless drawing of the enthralled Thing hurling an upside-down Johnny Storm across the room. It was also my first encounter with Ben Grimm, the poor soul forced to dwell within the misshapen identity of the Thing. In those days I was gathering information about who and what the FF were a little at a time. Jim Shooter has made the point many times that the characters, their whos, whats and wherefores should be clearly and completely established every issue, and in many ways I agree. But those first few issues of the FF were an adventure for me, an almost Holmesian exploit, slowly unravelling the secrets of the group. It was not until issue 9 that I learned Mister Fantastic's last name was Richards.

Meanwhile I was fast becoming an FF pusher. What friends I had I quickly converted. One, a fellow named Richard Finch, even found issue 4 in a second-hand bookstore and gave it to me. I won't say our life-long friendship was born at that moment, but it didn't hurt.

Issue 2 I found in the local barbershop. It took me three days to work up the nerve to ask the barber to sell it to me. I was willing to offer him cover-price for the slightly delapidated copy. He gave it to me for free, thus ensuring his canonization.

Along about now you're probably beginning to get a picture of a life-time fan, I suppose. One of those readers who stays with a book through thick and thin, through good and bad. Not quite. I stopped reading the FF, and comics in general, with issue 32. That book, as you may recall, featured the Invincible Man in his debut, and a cover blurb that challenged us to guess his identity. I did. By page four.

My mother had been pestering me to stop reading comics, now at the ripe old age of 14. This event convinced me she was right. After consistently reading comics for the better part of eight years I decided it was time to, as they say, set aside the things of youth, and look onward. Surprisingly enough I managed to go cold turkey. I would not look at another comic book until almost five years later, when my mother started buying Batman to send to my cousins in England. Now the unwritten parameters were passed to me, and it became my duty to decide if a comic was suitable reading for their developing psyches.

I was surprised, and a little dismayed to find that things had changed. The books were thinner, the stories longer, often a whole issue. And, during the height of the Batman television craze, the stories had gone campy. I wondered if the same thing had happened to the Fantastic Four. I picked up an issue in the local drugstore and thumbed through it. The Thing was

rocky now, and Johnny and Reed had more "heroic" physiques. And Doctor Doom was wearing an outlandish new costume that looked as if Captain ("I like color") Ultra might have designed it. I put the book back with disgust and departed, feeling as if something important had passed from my life.

Roll on the years. I was in my second year of college when the comics mystic call sounded to me again. In my first year I had done a comic book as an end-of-the-year project, and a fellow who lived in Calgary, where I was then located, took an interest in my career and started showing my stuff around to publishers and fanzines. One of the latter was a little packet called *Epoch*, a sort of very-distant cousin to the far-fabled CPL. The editor-publisher asked me to do a cover for him of the Fantastic Four battling Galactus. That amounted to a good trick, as I had never heard of Galactus at that time. So I went out and bought the latest issue, just by coincidence issue 132. A hundred issues later, I had returned to the fold. I was interested but unimpressed. Much of what was going on was a puzzle to me. Who were the Inhumans? And who was this Medusa character who had evidently replaced Sue? As I read subsequent issues the mystery cleared only a little. The sense of discovery I had found in those old Lee/Kirby issues was not there. But I read on. Looking back I think this was, perhaps not a good time to return to the FF. The plotting was muddled, the artwork (considering the combination of two of the greatest talents in the industry today, John Buscema and Joe Sinnott) was uninspired.

Something, clearly, was missing.

To find out what I began buying back issues. Through a stroke of luck I stumbled into our local second-hand bookstore the day a kid liquidated his entire collection. I managed to pick up every issue from 32 (!) to the current issue.

Then I sat down and read them all in virtually one sitting. A word of advice: don't do that. I lived in a Kirby world for days after. But I found out who Medusa and the Inhumans were. And I found out who Galactus was. And I found out Doctor Doom's "new" costume had been a temporary thing he had worn to have his portrait painted back in issue 85. I discovered a lot of incredible cosmic concepts. I discovered villains and vistas that boggled the imagination.

And I discovered what was missing. The cosmic had taken over. The scope had become all important. It was, simply put, no longer the Fantastic Four I had loved as a pre-teen.

Not long after this I joined Marvel as an artist. *Iron Fist* was a book that had captured my attention and, when I started drawing professionally, I was delighted to assume the chores on that title. It wasn't the *Fantastic Four*, but then, neither was the *Fantastic Four*.

I drew a lot of titles in those early years for Marvel: *Iron Fist*, *The Champions*, *Marvel Team-Up*, *The Avengers*, *The X-Men*. And the more I drew the more I found I was not drawing the Marvel comics I remembered so fondly. I got a terrific kick out of doing it, but there was a sense of transience, the feeling that we were not doing anything that was going to last. I became, alas, one of the doomsayers, predicting the demise of comics within the next five years. On that basis, I've been unemployed for about a year, but never mind that.

In the later part of my early days at Marvel, after I had been on the *X-Men* for about a year and a half, it fell to me to draw the *Fantastic Four*. I was jubilant. I whipped through my first issue at the phenomenal rate (for me) of six pages a day. I was on a high roll, and it looked like nothing could stop me. In point of fact, "nothing" did. The sense that nothing was happening in the book. The sense that it was going nowhere, and I was doing nothing to help. It has been said elsewhere that my first year on the FF did not exactly set the world on fire. I agree. Teamed with one of the most-praised writers in the business, and nigh-legendary inker, I was producing books which were, to me, no more inspired than those bland concoctions to which I had returned.

Marvel playing musical-writers after the departure of Marv Wolfman gave me an excuse to escape. I said that, once a consistent writing credit was assigned I would return to the book. In the industry, we call this "lying." I was running away from the FF, and I don't deny it.

I continued to read the book. Interesting things happened with the team of Moench and Sienkiewicz. But I still didn't find much to remind me of the old Fantastic Four. Then, in San Diego, I learned from Shooter that Moench would be leaving the title. I had been developing delusions of adequacy as a writer and asked for the assignment. Shooter agreed, and I submitted several plots to editor Jim Salicrup, who had been attempting to lure me to the book as artist. The first plot was a Human Torch solo story involving an innocent man on death row and Hammerhead. The second involved the Puppet Master and the third, Annihilus. Sienkiewicz was to continue as artist.

Then something I would never have predicted occurred. Almost overnight I hit my threshold on the X-Men. I dried up. I lost interest. I found that, suddenly, I didn't even *like* them anymore, as people. I felt confused, out of step, lost in a book with which I had become almost totally identified.

I asked off. I was granted my exit and asked for the Fantastic Four. There was a moment of hemming and hawing. Bill was doing a nice job and nobody wanted to intimate that he was being replaced by a superior talent, which is unfortunately an inevitable conclusion if an artist is removed for a title. I assured Bill this was not the case and Shooter agreed Bill's time would anyway be spent to better advantage on *Moon Knight*. The Moench/Sienkiewicz team had found their true place in the sun.

And I was confronted with the *Fantastic Four*.

Now I had no excuses if the stuff was wimpy, weak, or missing that certain something. As writer I could not blame the artist. As artist I could not blame the writer. By an unexpected sequence of events, I found I would not be able to blame the inker.

I started thinking about what I felt needed to be done with the book. I thought back to those early issues, say the first dozen. I did not reread them, but I sought to reconjour in my mind the feeling that had been there when I read them originally. What had been special about the Fantastic Four? Their powers were still the same, they had battled many of the same villains. Even the occasional cosmic story had appeared.

I began to conceive a larger picture. The Fantastic Four, like all those early Marvel characters created by Stan Lee, had been *real people*. They possessed outlandish powers, but their day to day activities were solidly grounded in a recognizable reality. Even the villains were three-dimensional people who had reasons for their villainy beyond sheer bloody-mindedness.

That was one of the things that was missing. The adventures had taken on a scope so broad, so cosmic, that the sense of presence was diminshed almost to non-existence. Villains now attacked the Fantastic Four soley with the intent of defeating the FF. *We* were no longer threatened. One had the impression that, having destroyed the FF, Doctor Doom would happily retire back to Latveria to live in peace.

So *reality*, as opposed to "realism."

And that reality extended beyond the locals and motivations of villains. When the FF had first gained their powers they had looked like a bunch of folks who suddenly gained superpowers. Now they looked like rugged, muscular heroes. Even the Thing had taken on a rounded, teddy bear look.

Their uniforms, which had originally looked like functional jumpsuits, now looked like skin-tight superhero clothes. In other words, they were starting to look like life imitating a comic book instead of the other way around. So I set about restoring what I felt was missing. To readers of less than five years or so, this turn back to the basics seemed unduly harsh. One even went so far as to tell me I was drawing the Thing incorrectly, and reminded me of how well I had done the Thing before. How *handsome* he had been. Without intending to, that fan underlined what was missing from the book.

So, with Marvel's, Shooter's, and Stan's blessings, I began doing every thing I could to recapture what I remembered. Perhaps I am succeeding. The book has risen to somewhere around the third best seller at Marvel, although sales have very rarely governed how a book is being handled. And, alas, the name John Byrne on a comic is guaranteed to increase sales, perhaps artificially.

But the book *feels* right again. Call it conceit if you wish, but I find I can read it again with something of the same feeling I had 20 years ago.

Twenty years! Yes, the FF has just celebrated its 20th anniversary as a comic book, and in these days of short-lived titles, that's something indeed. And that little kid from Sherwood Park, he's still lost in that wonderland into which he wandered in 1962.

And these days, he hopes he'll never find his way out. ■

The Art of John Byrne *(S.Q. Productions, 1980) showcases the art of John Byrne.*

The Fantastic Four Checklist

by Rocco Nigro

The information below will list title, page count, writer, penciller, inker, letterer, and where available, colorist. Other information will be noted if not apparent. The word "ditto" will be used when the exact same creative team is used as the previous issue.

Issue 1—November 1961, 10¢, "The Fantastic Four," 13 pages; "The Fantastic Four Meet the Mole Man," 6 pages; "The Mole Man's Secret," 6 pages. Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Dick Ayers, Art Simek. Origins of Mr. Fantastic (Reed Richards), the Thing (Benjamin J. Grimm), the Invisible Girl (Susan Storm) and the Human Torch (Johhny Storm) as the FF. Members are without costume.

Issue 2—January 1962, 10¢, "The Fantastic Four Meet the Skrulls From Outer Space," 6 pages; "The Flame That Died," 3 pages; "In the Shadow of Defeat," 5 pages; "The Final Challenge," 5 pages. Lee, 5 pages. Ditto.

Issue 3—March 1962, 12¢, "The Menace of the Miracle Man," 5 pages; "The Monster Lives," 5 pages; "The Flame That Died," 3 pages; "In the Shadow of Defeat," 5 pages; "The Final Challenge," 5 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sol Brodsky, Simek. Introduction of the Baxter Building, costumes and the Fantasti-Car.

Issue 4—May 1962, 12¢, "The Coming of the Sub-Mariner," (overall title). "On the Trail of the Torch," 5 pages; "Enter the Sub-Mariner," 5 pages; "Let the World Beware," 3 pages; "Sub-Mariner's Revenge," 5 pages; "Return to the Deep," 5 pages. Ditto. This story is the basis for *Sub-Mariner* 1.

Issue 5—July 1962, 12¢, "Prisoners of Dr. Doom," 5 pages; "Back to the Past," 5 pages; "On the Trail of Blackbeard," 3 pages; "Battle," 5 pages; "The Vengeance of Dr. Doom," 5 pages. Lee, Kirby, Joe Sinnott, Simek. Origin of Victor Von Doom (Dr. Doom), monarch of Latveria.

Issue 6—September 1962, 12¢, "Captives of the Deadly Duo," 6 pages; "When Super-Menaces Unite," 6 pages; "When Friends Fall Out," 3 pages; "Trapped," 5 pages; "The End, of the Beginning?," 4 pages. Lee, Kirby, Ayers, Simek. The Sub-Mariner and Dr. Doom team up.

Issue 7—October 1962, 12¢, "Prisoners of Kurrgo, Master of Planet X," (overall title). "It came from the Skies," 6 pages; "Outlawed," 5 pages; "Bound for Planet X," 3 pages; "Twenty-Four Hours Till Zero," 5 pages; "The End of Planet X," 5 pages. Ditto.

Issue 8—November 1962, 12¢, "Prisoners of the Puppet Master," 5 pages; "The Hands of the Puppet Master," 5 pages; "The Lady and the Monster," 3 pages; "Face to Face with the Puppet Master," 5 pages; "Death of a Puppet," 5 pages. Ditto. First appearance of Alicia Reiss Masters.

Issue 9—December 1962, 12¢, "The End of the Fantastic Four," 5 pages; "Sub-Mariner Gives the Orders," 5 pages; "The Fury of Mr. Fantastic," 3 pages; "The Flame of Battle," 5 pages; "Vengeance is Ours," 5 pages Ditto.

Issue 10—January 1963, 12¢, "The Return of Dr. Doom," 5 pages; "Back from the Dead," 5 pages; "The End of Mr. Fantastic," 3 pages; "No Place to Turn," 5 pages; "The Real Dr. Doom," 5 pages. Ditto. Doom changes bodies with Richards; Lee and Kirby appear, faces unrevealed.

Issue 11—February 1963, 12¢, "A Visit with the Fantastic Four," 11 pages. Ditto. Retells origin of FF, details pasts of Richards and Grimm, no villain. "The Impossible Man," 11 pages. Ditto.

Issue 12—March 1963, 12¢, "The Incredible Hulk," 5 pages; "Mission: Stop the Hulk," 5 pages; "Who is the Wrecker?," 3 pages; "The Hulk at Last," 10 pages. 10 pages. Ditto. New Fantastic-Car is shown.

Issue 13—April 1963, 12¢, "The Fantastic Four Versus the Red Ghost and His Indescribable Super-Apes," 5 pages; "Menace on the Moon," 6 pages; "The Watcher Appears," 3 pages; "Duel in the Dead City," 8 pages. Lee, Kirby, Steve Ditko, Simek.

Issue 14—May 1963, 12¢, "The Merciless Puppet Master," 22 pages; Lee, Kirby, Ayers, Simek. The Sub-Mariner appears.

Issue 15—June 1963, 12¢, "The Fantastic Four Battle the Mad Thinker and His Awesome Android," 20 pages. Ditto.

Issue 16—July 1963, 12¢, "The Micro-World of Dr. Doom," 22 pages. Ditto. Ant-Man appears.

Issue 17—August 1963, 12¢, "Defeated by Dr. Doom," 22 pages. Ditto.

Issue 18—September 1963, 12¢, "A Skrull Walks Among Us," 21 pages. Ditto. First appearance of the Super Skrull and the Skrull King.

Issue 19—October 1963, 12¢, "Prisoners of the Pharaoh," 22 pages. Lee, Kirby, Ayers Sam Rosen. First appearance of Pharaoh Rama Tut (a/k/a Kang the Conqueror, Immortus).

Issue 20—November 1963, 12¢, "The Mysterious Molecule Man," 22 pages. Lee, Kirby, Ayers, Simek.

Issue 21—December 1963, 12¢, "The Hate-Monger," 22 pages. Lee, Kirby, George Bell, Simek. Appearance by Col. Nick Fury of the CIA (pre-S.H.I.E.L.D.).

Issue 22—January 1964, 12¢, "The Return of the Mole Man," 22 pages. Lee, Kirby, Bell, S. Rosen.

Issue 23—February 1964, 12¢, "The Master Plan of Dr. Doom," 23 pages. Ditto. The Terrible Trio appear.

Issue 24—March 1964, 12¢, "The Infant Terrible," 23 pages. Ditto.

Issue 25—April 1964, 12¢, "The Hulk Vs. the Thing," 22 pages. Ditto. Hulk storyline from *Avengers* 4; Avengers cameo.

Issue 26—May 1964, 12¢, "The Avengers Take Over," 23 pages. Lee, Kirby, Bell, Simek. Hulk appears.

Issue 27—June 1964, 12¢, "The Search for the Sub-Mariner," 23 pages. Lee, Kirby, Bell, S. Rosen. Dr. Strange appears.

Rocco Nigro has been an avid comics collector for the past seven years.

Issue 28—July 1964, 12¢, "We Have to Fight the X-Men," 22 pages. Lee, Kirby, Chic Stone, Simek. The Mad Thinker and the Puppet Master are the villains.

Issue 29—August 1964, 12¢, "It Started on Yancy Street," 22 pages. Ditto. Watcher appears, Red Ghost and his Super-Apes are villains.

Issue 30—September 1964, 12¢, "The Dreaded Diablo," 22 pages. Ditto.

Issue 31—October 1964, 12¢, "The Mad Menance of the Macabre Mole Man," 21 pages. Lee, Kirby, Stone, S. Rosen. First appearance of Dr. Franklin Storm, Sue and Johnny's father.

Issue 32—November 1964, 12¢, "Death of a Hero," 21 pages. Ditto. Invincible Man (the Super Skrull disguised as Franklin Storm) is villain. The real Franklin Storm dies. Storm family past is detailed.

Issue 33—December 1964, 12¢, "Side by Side with Sub-Mariner," 21 pages. Lee, Kirby, Stone, Simek. Villain: Attuma.

Issue 34—January 1965, 12¢, "A House Divided," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Gideon.

Issue 35—February 1965, 12¢, "Calamity on the Campus," 20 pages. Ditto. First appearance of Dragon Man. Villain: Diablo. Reed and Sue are engaged at end of story.

Issue 36—March 1965, 12¢, "The Frightful Four," 21 pages. Ditto. First appearance of Madam Medusa, an Inhuman and member of Frightful Four with the Wizard, Paste-Pot Pete, Sandman.

Issue 37—April 1965, 12¢, "Behold, a Distant Star," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: Skrull King and Skrulls.

Issue 38—May 1965, 12¢, "Defeated by the Frightful Four," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Stone, S. Rosen. Paste-Pot Pete becomes the Trapster.

Issue 39—June 1965, 12¢, "A Blind Man Shall Lead Them," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Frank Ray, Simek. Wally Wood inks Matt Murdock, Daredevil. Villain: Dr. Doom.

Issue 40—July 1965, 12¢, "The Battle of the Baxter Building," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Vince Colletta, Simek. Wally Wood inks Daredevil, Matt Murdock. Villain: Dr. Doom.

Issue 41—August 1965, 12¢, "The Brutal Betrayal of Ben Grimm," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Colletta, S. Rosen. Villains: the Frightful Four.

Issue 42—September 1965, 12¢, "To Save You, Why Must I Kill You?," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: the Frightful Four.

Issue 43—October 1965, 12¢, "Lo, There Shall Be an Ending," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Colletta, Simek. Villains: the Frightful Four.

Issue 44—November 1965, 12¢, "The Gentleman's Name is Gorgon," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Medusa appears.

Issue 45—December 1965, 12¢, "Among Us Hide the Inhumans," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. First appearance of Black Bolt, Crystal, Karnak, Triton, Lockjaw, members of the royal family, which includes Gorgon and Medusa, who also appear. Appearance by Dragon Man. The FF introduce the airjet-cycle.

Issue 46—January 1966, 12¢, "Those Who Would Destroy Us," 20 pages. Ditto. Origins of the Inhumans in their Great Refuge. Villains: Dragon Man, Seeker.

Issue 47—February 1966, 12¢, "Beware the Hidden Land," 20 pages. Ditto. First appearance of Maximus (Black Bolt's brother), Aireo, and the Alpha Primitives. Villains: Maximus, Seeker, Alpha Primitives, Dragon Man.

Issue 48—March 1966, 12¢, "The Coming of Galactus," 20 pages. Ditto. First appearance of Silver Surfer (Norrin Radd). Inhumans and the Watcher appear. Villains: Galactus, Maximus. Inhumans stranded behind Negative Zone.

Issue 49—April 1966, 12¢, "If This Be Doomsday," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Appearances by the Silver Surfer, the Watcher, Alicia Masters, the Punisher (Galactus' robot). Villain: Galactus.

Issue 50—May 1966, 12¢, "The Startling Saga of the Silver Surfer," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by the Watcher, Alicia Masters, scientist who becomes Ben Grimm imposter. First appearance of Wyatt Wingfoot. Villain: Galactus.

Issue 51—June 1966, 12¢, "This Man, This Monster," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: scientist who impersonates the Thing dies in the Negative Zone.

Issue 52—July 1966, 12¢, "The Black Panther," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. First appearance of T'Challa and his kingdom, Wakanda. Wyatt Wingfoot appears in each issue thru 61.

Issue 53—August 1966, 12¢, "The Way It Began," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Origin of Black Panther, whose father, T'Chaka, dies in flashback. Villain: Klaw.

Issue 54—September 1966, 12¢, "Whosoever Finds the Evil Eye," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. The Black Panther and the Inhumans appear. Villain: Prester John, the Wanderer.

Issue 55—October 1966, 12¢, "When Strikes the Silver Surfer," 20 pages. Ditto.

Issue 56—November 1966, 12¢, "Klaw, the Murderous Master of Sound," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Appearances by the Inhumans, Dr. Doom, the Silver Surfer.

Issue 57—December 1966, 12¢, "Enter Dr. Doom," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by Sandman (villain), the Silver Surfer, the Inhumans.

Issue 58—January 1967, 12¢, "The Dismal Dregs of Defeat," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Dr. Doom. Appearance by the Silver Surfer.

Issue 59—February 1967, 12¢, "Doomsday," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Dr. Doom. Appearance by the Silver Surfer. The Inhumans break free of the Negative Zone.

Issue 60—March 1967, 12¢, "The Perils and the Power," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: Dr. Doom. Appearances by the Silver Surfer, the Inhumans.

Issue 61—April 1967, 12¢, "Where Stalks the Sandman?," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by the Silver Surfer, the Inhumans.

Issue 62—May 1967, 12¢, "And One Shall Save Him," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: Blastaar, Sandman. Appearance by the Inhumans.

Issue 63—June 1967, 12¢, "Blastaar, the Living Bomb-Burst," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by Sandman (villain), Triton, Crystal.

Issue 64—July 1967, 12¢, "The Sentry Sinister," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Inter-Galactic Sentry #459. Appearancs by the Kree, Triton, Crystal, Lockjaw.

Issue 65—August 1967, 12¢, "From Beyond This Planet Earth," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: Ronan, the Accuser. Appearance by Kree Supreme Intelligence.

Issue 66—September 1967, 12¢, "What Lurks Behind the Beehive?," 20 pages. Ditto. Origin of Him (later called Adam Warlock) only in flashback; Him hasn't emerged from cocoon yet. Appearances by Crystal, Alicia Masters.

Issue 67—October 1967, 12¢, "When Opens the Cocoon," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by Crystal, Alicia, and Him (Adam Warlock), who has emerged from his cocoon.

Issue 68—November 1967, 12¢, "His Mission: Destroy the Fantastic Four," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: the Thinker, disguised as Dr. Santini. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 69—December 1967, 12¢, "By Ben Betrayed," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: the Thinker. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 70—January 1968, 12¢, "When Fall the Mighty," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: the Thinker and his androids. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 71—February 1968, 12¢, "And So It Ends," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villains: the Thinker and his androids. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 72—March 1968, 12¢, "Where Soars the Silver Surfer," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by Crystal, the Watcher.

Issue 73—April 1968, 12¢, "The Flames of Battle," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Appearances by Daredevil, Thor, Spider-Man, Dr. Doom. Crossover with *Daredevil* 37-38.

Issue 74—May 1968, 12¢, "When Calls Galactus," 20 pages. Ditto. Appearances by the Punisher (villain), the Silver Surfer, Crystal.

Issue 75—June 1968, 12¢, "Worlds within Worlds," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Galactus. Appearances by the Silver Surfer, Crystal.

Issue 76—July 1968, 12¢, "Stranded in Sub-Atomica," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: Psycho-Man, Galactus. Appearances by Crystal, the Silver Surfer.

Issue 77—August 1968, 12¢, "Shall Earth Endure?," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villains: Psycho-Man, Galactus. Appearances by the Silver Surfer, Crystal.

Issue 78—September 1968, 12¢, "The Thing No More," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: the Wizard. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 79—October 1968, 12¢, "A Monster Forever?," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: Android Man. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 80—November 1968, 12¢, "Where Treads the Living Totem," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: Tomazooma. Appearances by Crystal, Wyatt Wingfoot. Sue Richards does not appear.

Issue 81—December 1968, 12¢, "Enter: the Exquisite Elemental," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Crystal joins the FF, appears in each issue thru 95. Sue does not appear.

Issue 82—January 1969, 12¢, "The Mark of the Madman," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: Maximus, Alpha Primitives. Appearance by the Inhumans. Sue does not appear.

Issue 83—February 1969, 12¢, "Shall Man Survive," 20 pages. Lee Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villains: Maximus, evil Inhumans, Alpha Primitives. Appearance by the (good) Inhumans.

Issue 84—March 1969, 12¢, "The Name Is Doom," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Dr. Doom. No appearance by Sue.

Issue 85—April 1969, 12¢, "Within This Tortured Land," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnot, Simek. Villain: Dr. Doom.

Issue 86—May 1969, 12¢, "The Victims," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: Dr. Doom. Sue returns to active duty following the birth of Franklin Richards in *FF Annual* 6 (following *FF* 80).

Issue 87—June 1969, 12¢, "The Power and the Pride," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: Dr. Doom.

Issue 88—July 1969, 12¢, "A House There Was," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: the Mole Man.

Issue 89—August 1969, 15¢, "The Madness of the Mole Man," 20 pages. Ditto.

Issue 90—September 1969, 15¢, "The Skrull Takes a Slave," 20 pages. Ditto. Sue not active member in story.

Issue 91—October 1969, 15¢, "The Thing Enslaved," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: Skrull, the Slave-Master. Sue not active member in story.

Issue 92—November 1969, 15¢, "Ben Grimm: Killer," 20 pages. Ditto. Villains: Skrulls of Kral. Sue not active member in story.

Issue 93—December 1969, 15¢, "At the Mercy of Torgo," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Frank Giacola, Simek. Villains: Skrulls of Kral. Sue does not appear in story.

Issue 94—January 1970, 15¢, "The Return of the Frightful Four," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Appearance of Medusa, as villain. First appearance of Agatha Harkness and Ebony, her cat.

Issue 95—February 1970, 15¢, "Tomorrow, World War Three," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Appearance of Medusa. Crystal leaves the FF; Sue becomes an active member.

Issue 96—March 1970, 15¢, "The Mad Thinker and His Androids of Death," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Giacola, S. Rosen.

Issue 97—April 1970, 15¢, "The Monster from the Lost Lagoon," 20 pages. Ditto.

Issue 98—May 1970, 15¢, "Mystery on the Moon," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: Kree Sentry.

Issue 99—June 1970, 15¢, "The Torch Goes Wild," 20 pages. Ditto.

Appearance by the Inhumans.

Issue 100—July 1970, 15¢, "The Long Journey Home," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villains: the Thinker, the Puppet Master, dozens of androids.

Issue 101—August 1970, 15¢, "Bedlam in the Baxter Building," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: Maggia.

Issue 102—September 1970, 15¢, "The Strength of the Sub-Mariner," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Magento.

Issue 103—October 1970, 15¢, "At War with Atlantis," 20 pages. Lee, John Romita, John Verpoorten, S. Rosen. Villain: Magneto. Appearance by the Sub-Mariner.

Issue 104—November 1970, 15¢, "Our World Enslaved," 20 pages. Lee, Romita, Verpoorten, Simek. Villain: Magneto. Appearance by the Sub-Mariner.

Issue 105—December 1970, 15¢, "The Monster in the Streets," 20 pages. Ditto.

Issue 106—January 1971, 15¢, "The Monster's Secret," 20 pages. Lee, Romita, Sinnott, Simek.

Issue 107—February 1971, 15¢, "And Now the Thing," 20 pages. Lee, John Buscema, Sinnott, Simek.

Issue 108—March 1971, 15¢, "The Monstrous Mystery of the Nega-Man," 20 pages. Lee, Kirby/J. Buscema/Romita, Sinnott, S. Rosen.

Issue 109—April 1971, 15¢, "Death in the Negative Zone," 20 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: Annihilus.

Issue 110—May 1971, 15¢, "One from Four Leaves Three," 20 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Mike Stevens. Villain: Annihilus.

Issue 111—June 1971, 15¢, "The Thing Amok," 20 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, S. Rosen. The Hulk Appears.

Issue 112—July 1971, 15¢, "Battle of the Behemoths," 20 pages. Ditto. The Hulk vs. the Thing.

Issue 113—August 1971, 15¢, "The Power of the Over-Mind," 20 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. The Watcher appears.

Issue 114—September 1971, 15¢, "But Who Shall Stop the Over-Mind?," 20 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Giacola, S. Rosen. The Watcher appears.

Issue 115—October 1971, 15¢, "The Secret of the Eternals," 20 pages. Archie Goodwin, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. The Watcher appears. Origin of the Over-Mind.

Issue 116—November 1971, 25¢, "The Alien, the Ally, and Armageddon," 15 pages; "Now Falls the Final Hour," 19 pages. Ditto. Dr. Doom joins the FF for this issue. Origin of the Stranger. Appearance by the Watcher. Villain: the Over-Mind.

Issue 117—December 1971, 20¢, "The Flame and the Quest," 20 pages. Goodwin, J. Buscema, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Villain: Diablo. Appearance by Crystal.

Issue 118—January 1972, 20¢, "Thunder in the Ruins," 15 pages. Goodwin, J. Buscema, Jim Mooney, S. Rosen. Villain: Diablo. Appearance by Crystal. "What Mad World?," 6 pages. Same creative team as first story. First appearances of Reed Richards, Ben and Sue Grimm of an alternative universe. Takes place during a break in the first story.

Issue 119—February 1972, 20¢, "Three Stood Together," 21 pages. Roy Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. Black Panther appearance. Villain: Klaw.

Issue 120—March 1972, 20¢, "The Horror That Walks on Air," 21 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. Villains: Galactus, Gabriel.

Issue 121—April 1972, 20¢, "The Mysterious Mind-Blowing Secret of Gabriel," 21 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Appearances by Galactus (villain), the Silver Surfer.

Issue 122—May 1972, 20¢, "Galactus Unleashed," 21 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. Appearance by the Silver Surfer.

Issue 123—June 1972, 20¢, "This World Enslaved," 20 pages. Lee, J. Buscema, Sinnott, John Costanza. Villain: Galactus. Appearance by the Silver Surfer.

Issue 124—July 1972, 20¢, "The Return of the Monster," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: alien from FF 97.

Issue 125—August 1972, 20¢, "The Monster's Secret," 20 pages. Ditto.

Issue 126—September 1972, 20¢, "The Way It Began," 20 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Costanza. Origin of FF retold. Villain: Mole Man.

Issue 127—October 1972, 20¢, "Where the Sun Dares Not Shine," 20 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: Mole Man.

Issue 128—November 1972, 20¢, "Death in a Dark and Lonely Place," 20 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. Villain: Mole Man. Four page insert of friends and foes of the FF.

Issue 129—December 1972, 20¢, "The Frightful Four—Plus One," 20 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek. Medusa appears. Frightful Four members are Sandman, the Wizard, the Trapster, Thundra (first appearance). Human Torch leaves the FF.

Issue 130—January 1973, 20¢, "Battleground; the Baxter Building," 20 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Simek, Petra Goldberg. Villains: the Frightful Four. Sue Richards leaves the FF, Medusa is *de facto* member.

Issue 131—February 1973, 20¢, "Revolt in Paradise," 20 pages. Thomas, Ross Andru, Sinnott, Costanza, P. Goldberg. Appearances by Quicksilver and the Inhumans. Villain: Omega, the ultimate Alpha Primitive. Sue makes no appearance.

Issue 132—March 1973, 20¢, "Omega, the Ultimate Enemy," 20 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Costanza, P. Goldberg. Appearances by Quicksilver and Inhumans. Villains: Maximus, Alpha Primitives. Medusa made official member, replacing Sue, who does not appear. Medusa appears in all issues through 159. Torch breaks up with Crystal, rejoins FF, gets new (red) costume.

Issue 133—April 1973, 20¢, "Thundra at Dawn," 21 pages. Gerald Conway, Ramona Fradon, Sinnott, Costanza, Stan Goldberg. Villains: the Frightful Four. Sue does not appear.

Issue 134—May 1973, 20¢, "A Dragon Stalks the Skies," 20 pages. G. Conway, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Simek, David Hunt. Villains: Gideon and the Dragon Man.

Issue 135—June 1973, 20¢, "The Eternity Machine," 20 pages. G. Conway, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Simek, S. Goldberg. Villains: Gideon, Dragon Man.

Issue 136—July 1973, 20¢, "Rock around the Cosmos," 19 pages. Ditto. Appearance by the Shaper. Sue does not appear.

Issue 137—August 1973, 20¢, "Rumble on Planet 3," 19 pages. G. Conway, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Simek, Glynis Wein. Appearance by the Shaper. Sue does not appear.

Issue 138—September 1973, 20¢, "Madness Is the Miracle Man," 19 pages. G. Conway, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Costanza, P. Goldberg. Origin of Miracle Man. Sue does not appear. Wyatt Wingfoot appears thru 144.

Issue 139—October 1973, 20¢, "Target: Tomorrow," 19 pages. G. Conway, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Costanza, S. Goldberg. Villain: Miracle Man.

Issue 140—November 1973, 20¢, "Annihilus Revealed," 19 pages. G. Conway, J. Buscema/Sinnott, Sinnott, Costanza, George Roussos. Origin of Annihilus.

Issue 141—December 1973, 20¢, "The End of the Fantastic Four," 20 pages. Ditto. Villain: Annihilus. Reed Richards destroys his son Franklin's mind to save the world. The FF break up.

Issue 142—January 1974, 20¢, "No Friend Beside Him," 19 pages. G. Conway, Rick Buckler, Sinnott, Costanza, P. Goldberg. Appearance by Dr. Doom. The Thing vs. Darkoth.

Issue 143—February 1974, 20¢, "The Terrible Triumph of Dr. Doom," 19 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Giacoia, Costanza, P. Goldberg. Villainous Doom brings FF together. Appearance by Darkoth, not as villain.

Issue 144—March 1974, 20¢, "Attack," 19 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Sinnott, Simek, Roussos. Villains: Dr. Doom and his robot, the Seeker (not Maximus' servant). Appearance by Darkoth. Sue does not appear.

Issue 145—April 1974, 20¢, "Nightmare in the Snow," 19 pages. G. Conway, Andru, Sinnott, Costanza, Linda Lessman. Sue does not appear.

Issue 146—May 1974, 25¢, "Doomsday: 200 Degrees Below," 19 pages. G. Conway, Andru, Sinnott, Costanza, Roussos. Sue and Reed do not appear.

Issue 147—June 1974, 25¢, "The Sub-Mariner Strikes," 19 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Sinnott, Simek, Lessman. Sue sends divorce papers to Reed.

Issue 148—July 1974, 25¢, "War on the Thirty-Sixth Floor," 19 pages, Ditto. Villains: the Frightful Four. Thundra no longer villain. Appearance by the Sub-Mariner.

Issue 149—August 1974, 25¢, "To Love, Honor, and Destroy," 18 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Sinnott, Costanza, P. Goldberg. Appearance by Triton (in disguise this issue and last), the Sub-Mariner. Reed and Sue are reconciled.

Issue 150—September 1974, 25¢, "Ultron-7: He'll Rule the World," 10 pages; "The Wedding of Crystal and Quicksilver," 7 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Sinnott, Costanza, Lessman. Appearances by the Avengers, the Inhumans, Maximus. Franklin Richards regains his mind. Story continued from *Avengers* 127.

Issue 151—October 1974, 25¢, "Thundra and Lightning," 18 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Sinnott, Simek, P. Goldberg. Appearance by and origin of Thundra. Sue does not appear.

Issue 152—November 1974, 25¢, "A World of Madness Made," 17 pages. G. Conway, Buckler, Mooney, Simek, Jan Brunner. Appearance by Thundra.

Issue 153—December 1974, 25¢, "Worlds in Collision," 17 pages. Tony Isabella, Buckler, Sinnott, Joe Rosen, P. Goldberg. Appearance by Thundra. Sue does not appear.

Issue 154—January 1975, 25¢, "The Man in the Mystery Mask," 19 pages. Len Wein, Bob Brown, Giacoia/Mike Esposito, Simek, Glynis Wein. Only 7 pages plus 2 panels are all new; the rest is an edited reprinting of the S.H.I.E.L.D. story from *Strange Tales* 127, "The Mystery Villain". Nick Fury appears. Sue does not appear.

Issue 155—February 1975, 25¢, "Battle Royal," 17 pages. L. Wein, Buckler, Sinnott, Costanza, G. Wein. Appearance by the Silver Surfer. Villain: Dr. Doom. Sue does not appear.

Issue 156—March 1975, 25¢, "Middle Game," 18 pages. Thomas/L. Wein, Buckler, Sinnott, Costanza, Janice Cohen. Villain: Dr. Doom. Appearance by the Silver Surfer. Sue does not appear.

Issue 157—April 1975, 25¢, "And Now the End Game Cometh," (overall title), "Check," 8 pages; "Zugzwang," 11 pages. L. Wein/Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, P. Goldberg. Villains: Dr. Doom, Mephisto. Silver Surfer appears. Sue does not appear.

Issue 158—May 1975, 25¢, "Invasion from the 5th Dimension," 17 pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Cohen. Villain: Xuma. Quicksilver, the Inhumans appear. Sue does not appear.

Issue 159—June 1975, 25¢, "Havoc in the Hidden Land," 18 pages. Ditto. Villain: Xuma. Quicksilver, Inhumans appear. Medusa resigns from the FF as Sue returns. Human Torch dons original (blue) costume.

Issue 160—July 1975, 25¢, "In One World and Out the Other," 18 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Stone, Ray Holloway, Cohen. Appearance of Ben and Sue Grimm, Reed Richards of alternate universe. Villain: Arkon.

Issue 161—August 1975, 25¢, "All the World Wars at Once," 18 pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, G. Wein. Appearance of Reed Richards, Ben and Sue Grimm of alternate universe. Villain: Arkon.

Issue 162—September 1975, 25¢, "The Shape of Things to Come," 18

pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Phil Rachelson. Villain: Arkon. Appearances by Reed Richards, Sue and Ben Grimm of alternate universe.

Issue 163—October 1975, 25¢, "Finale," 7 pages; "Arkon at Bay," 6 pages; "Victory in Hyper-Space," 5 pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Don Warfield. Villains: Arkon, Gaard (Johnny Storm of alternate universe). Appearance by Reed Richards, Sue and Ben Grimm of alternate universe.

Issue 164—November 1975, 25¢, "The Crusader Syndrome," 18 pages. Thomas, George Perez, Sinnott, Costanza, P. Goldberg.

Issue 165—December 1975, 25¢, "The Light of Other Worlds," 18 pages. Ditto. Origin of Crusader/Marvel Boy.

Issue 166—January 1976, 25¢, "If It's Tuesday, This Must Be the Hulk," 17 pages. Thomas, Perez, Colletta, J. Rosen, Rachelson.

Issue 167—February 1976, 25¢, "Titans Two," 17 pages. Thomas, Perez, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Rachelson. The Thing and the Hulk team up. The Thing changes back to Ben Grimm.

Issue 168—March 1976, 25¢, "Where Have All the Powers Gone?," 18 pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, Rosen, Rachelson. Luke Cage replaces the Thing, now non-super-powered, in the FF. Villains: the Wrecker, the Puppet Master.

Issue 169—April 1976, 25¢, "Five Characters in Search of a Madman," 17 pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, Costanza, Rachelson. Villain: the Puppet Master. Ben Grimm gets Thing exoskeleton from Reed.

Issue 170—May 1976, 25¢, "A Sky-Full of Fear," 17 pages. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Rachelson. Villain: the Puppet Master. Luke Cage no longer member.

Issue 171—June 1976, 25¢, "Death Is a Golden Gorilla," 17 pages. Carla Conway/Thomas, Buckler, Perez, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Rachelson.

Issue 172—July 1976, 25¢, "Cry, the Bedeviled Planet," 17 pages. Thomas/Bill Mantlo, Perez, Sinnott/David Hunt, J. Rosen, P. Goldberg. Villains: Galactus, Destroyer.

Issue 173—August 1976, 25¢, "Counter-Earth Must Die at the Hand of Galactus," 17 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Rachelson.

Issue 174—September 1976, 30¢, "Starquest," 17 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Cohen. Villain: Galactus.

Issue 175—October 1976, 30¢, "When Giants Walk the Sky," 17 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, J. Buscema, J. Rosen, Cohen. Villain: Galactus, who turns Ben Grimm back into the Thing.

Issue 176—November 1976, 30¢, "Improbable As It May Seem, the Impossible Man Is Back in Town," 17 pages. Thomas, Perez, Sinnott/Hunt, J. Rosen, Michele Wolfman. Lee, Kirby, Perez, Thomas, Verpoorten, Marv Wolfman, Goodwin, John Romita, L. Wein, G. Conway appear.

Issue 177—December 1976, 30¢, "Look Out for the Frightful Four," 17 pages. Thomas, Perez, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Marie Severin. Brute (Reed Richards of Counter-Earth) is Frightful Four member. Impossible Man, Thundra, Tigra appear.

Issue 178—January 1977, 30¢, "Call My Killer the Brute," 17 pages. Thomas, Perez, Hunt, J. Rosen, Hunt. Origin of Brute. Impossible Man, Thundra, Tigra, appear. Villains: the Frightful Four. Reed loses his powers.

Issue 179—February 1977, 30¢, "A Robinson Crusoe in the Negative Zone," 17 pages. Thomas/G. Conway, Ron Wilson, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Roussos. Thundra, Tigra, Impossible Man appear. Villains: Brute, Annihilus, Metalloid.

Issue 180—March 1977, 30¢, Reprint of *FF* 101, 18 pages.

Issue 181—April 1977, 30¢, "Side by Side with Annihilus," 17 pages. Thomas, Wilson, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Roussos. Villains: Brute, the Mad Thinker. Appearances by Thundra, Tigra, Impossible Man.

Issue 182—May 1977, 30¢, "Enter: the Mad Thinker," 17 pages. Mantlo/L. Wein/Jim Shooter/Goodwin, Sal Buscema, Sinnott, Costanza, Roussos. Appearances by Thundra, Tigra, Impossible Man. Villains: Brute, Annihilus.

Issue 183—June 1977, 30¢, "Battleground: the Baxter Building," 17 pages. Mantlo, S. Buscema, Sinnott, Gasper, Phil Rache. Appearances by Thundra, Tigra, Impossible Man. Villains: Brute, Annihilus, Mad Thinker.

Issue 184—July 1977, 30¢, "Aftermath: the Eliminator," 18 pages. L. Wein, Perez, Sinnott, J. Rosen, G. Wein. Appearance by Thundra, Tigra, Impossible Man.

Issue 185—August 1977, 30¢, "Here There Be Witches," 17 pages. L. Wein, Perez, Sinnott, Gasper, G. Wein.

Issue 186—September 1977, 30¢, "Enter Salem's Seven," 17 pages. L. Wein, Perez, Sinnott, Costanza, G. Wein.

Issue 187—October 1977, 30¢, "Trouble Times Two," 17 pages. L. Wein, Perez, Sinnott, J. Rosen, G. Wein. Villains: Klaw, Molecule Man. Impossible Man appears.

Issue 188—November 1977, 35¢, "The Rampage of Reed Richards," 18 pages. Ditto. Appearances by the Watcher Impossible Man. Villain: Molecule Man.

Issue 189—December 1977, 35¢, Reprint of "The Torch That Was," from *FF Annual* 4.

Issue 190—January 1978, 35¢, "The Way It Was," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, S. Buscema, Tony Dezuniga, Costanza, G. Wein. An album issue.

Issue 191—February 1978, 35¢, "Four No More," 17 pages. L. Wein, Perez, Sinnott, Costanza, G. Wein. Villain: the Plunderer. The FF resign.

Issue 192—March 1978, 35¢, "He Who Soweth the Wind," 17 pages. Roger Slifer/L. Wein, Perez, Sinnott, J. Rosen, G. Wein. Torch also story. Villain: the Texas Twister.

Issue 193—April 1978, 35¢, "Day of the Death-Demon," 18 pages. L. Wein/Keith Pollard/Mantlo, Pollard, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Francoise Mouly/Cohen. Thing solo story. Villains: Darkoth, Diablo.

Issue 194—May 1978, 35¢, "Vengeance Is Mine," 17 pages. L. Wein/Pollard/Mantlo, Pollard, Hunt, Annette Kawecki, Roussos. Thing solo story. Villains: Darkoth, Diablo.

Issue 195—June 1978, 35¢, "Beware the Ravaging Retrievers," 18 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard/Pablo Marcos, Marcos, Denise Wohl, Rache. Invisible Girl solo story. Sub-Mariner appears.

Issue 196—July 1978, 35¢, "Who in the World Is the Invincible Man?," 18 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard/Marcos, Marcos, J. Rosen, G. Wein. Villain: Dr. Doom.

Issue 197—August 1978, 35¢, "The Riotous Return of the Red Ghost," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard/ Sinnott, Sinnott, Costanza, Grossman. Villain: Dr. Doom. Reed gets his powers back.

Issue 198—September 1978, 35¢, "Invasion," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Rick Parker, Cohen. Villain: Dr. Doom.

Issue 199—October 1978, 35¢, "The Son of Dr. Doom," 18 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Costanza, Cohen. Villain: Dr. Doom. The FF are reunited.

Issue 200—November 1978, 60¢, "When Titans Clash," 34 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Costanza, Mouly. Dr. Doom vs. Mr. Fantastic. Doom goes mad (for a while).

Issue 201—December 1978, 35¢, "Home, Deadly Home," 17 pages. Ditto.

Issue 202—January 1979, 35¢, "There's One Iron Man Too Many," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, J. Buscema, Sinnott, Jim Novak, Cohen. Villain: Quasimodo.

Issue 203—February 1979, 35¢, "And a Child Shall Slay Them," 18 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Costanza, G. Wein. First appearance of Willie, Jr., a mutant.

Issue 204—March 1979, 35¢, "The Andromeda Attack," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Novak, Mouly. Villain: the Skrull.

Issue 205—April 1979, 35¢, "When Worlds Die," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Novak, G. Wein. Villain: the Skrull.

Issue 206—May 1979, 40¢, "The Death of the Fantastic Four," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Pollard, Sinnott, Costanza, Ben Sean. Villains: the Skrull. Nova appears.

Issue 207—June 1979, 40¢, "Might of the Monocle," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, S. Buscema, Sinnott, Costanza, Sean. Spider-Man vs. the Human Torch.

Issue 208—July 1979, 40¢, "The Power of the Sphinx," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, S. Buscema, D. Hands, J. Rosen, G. Wein. Nova appears.

Issue 209—August 1979, 40¢, "Trapped in the Sargasso of Space," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, John Byrne, Sinnott, Tom Orzechowski, G. Wein. Herbie the Robot, Nova appears.

Issue 210—September 1979, 40¢, "In Search of Galactus," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Byrne, Sinnott, Costanza, Sean. The Sphinx, Herbie the Robot appear.

Issue 211—October 1979, 40¢, "If This Be Terrax," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Byrne, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Sean. Villains: Galactus, Tyros.

Issue 212—November 1979, 40¢, "The Battle of the Titans," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Byrne, Sinnott, Costanza, Carl Gafford. Villains: the Sphinx, Terrax, Galactus, Skrull.

Issue 213—December 1979, 40¢, "In Final Battle," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Byrne, Sinnott, Costanza, Sean. Villains: Terrax, Skrull, the Sphinx, Galactus.

Issue 214—January 1980, 40¢, "And Then There Was One," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Byrne, Sinnott, Costanza, Gafford. All but Johnny are dying of rapid aging. Villain: the Super Skrull.

Issue 215—February 1980, 40¢, "Blastaar," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman, Byrne, Sinnott, J. Rosen, Gafford.

Issue 216—March 1980, 40¢, "Where There Be Gods," 17 pages. Marv Wolfman/Mantlo, Byrne/Marcos, Marcos, Irving Watanabe/Michael Higgins, Gafford. Villain: Blastaar.

Issue 217—April 1980, 40¢, "Masquerade," 17 pages. Mantlo, Byrne, Sinnott, Costanza, Bob Sharen. Herbie the Robot, Dazzler appear.

Issue 218—May 1980, 40¢, "When a Spider-Man Comes Calling," 17 pages. Mantlo, Byrne, Sinnott, Novak, Sean. Continued from *Peter Parker, the Spectacular Spider-Man* 42. Villain: the Frightful Four.

Issue 219—June 1980, 40¢, "Leviathans," 17 pages. Doug Moench, Bill Sienkiewicz, Sinnott, Novak, Roussos. The Sub-Mariner appears.

Issue 220—July 1980, 40¢, "And the Lights Went Out All Over the World," 16 pages. Byrne, Byrne/Sinnott, Sinnott, Novak/Watanabe. Sharen. 1 page pin-up by Joe Sinnott.

Issue 221—August 1980, 40¢, "Tower of Crystal, Dreams of Glass," 17 pages. Byrne, Byrne/Sinnott, Sinnott, Novak/Watanabe, Gafford.

Issue 22—September 1980, 50¢, "The Possession of Franklin Richards," 17 pages. Moench, Sienkiewicz, Sinnott, Novak, Roussos.

Issue 223—October 1980, 50¢, "That a Child May Live," 17 pages. Ditto.

Issue 224—November 1980, 50¢, "The Darkfield Illumination," 17 pages. Moench, Sienkiewicz, Marcos, Novak, Roussos. 6 pages of pin-ups by Kirby, Ayers, Sienkiewicz, Terry Austin.

Issue 225—December 1980, 50¢, "The Blind God's Tears," 23 pages. Ditto. Thor appearance.

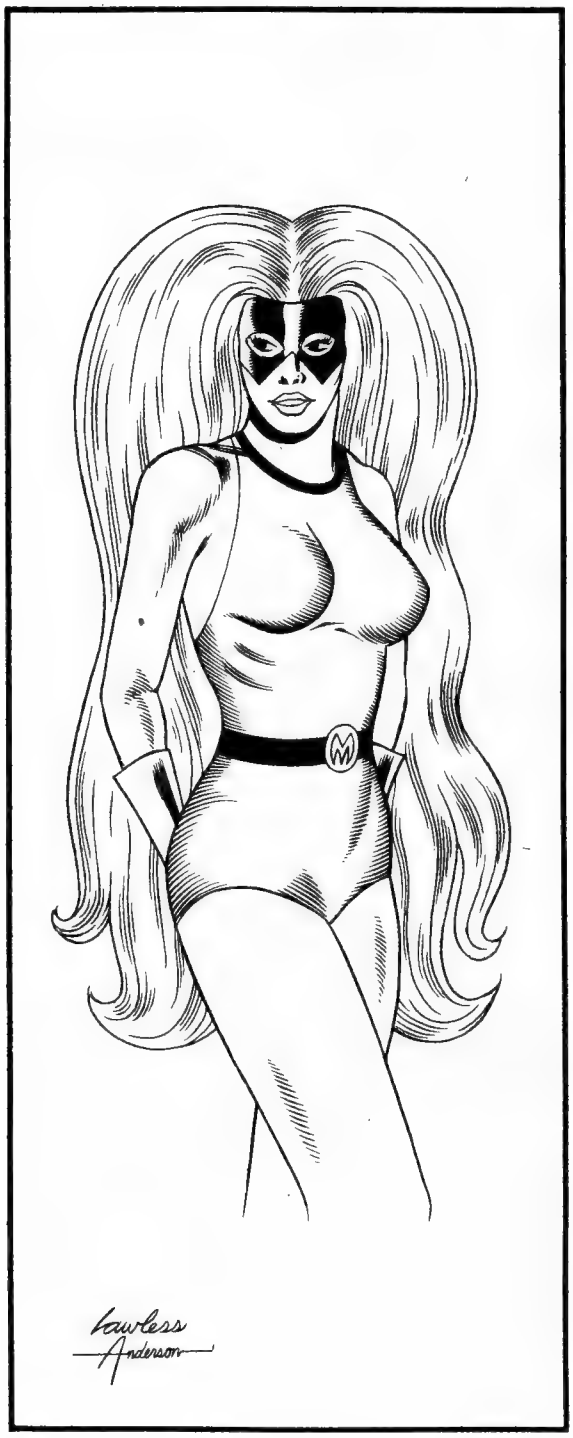
Issue 226—January 1981, 50¢, "The Samarai Destroyer," 22 pages. Moench, Sienkiewicz, Marcos/Bruce Patterson, Novak, Roussos. The Shogun Warriors appear.

Issue 227—February 1981, 50¢, "The Brain Parasites," 22 pages. Moench, Sienkiewicz, Patterson, Novak, Roussos.

Issue 228—March 1981, 50¢, "Ego-Spawn," 22 pages. Moench, Sienkiewicz, Sinnott, Novak, Roussos.

Issue 229—April 1981, 50¢, "The Thing from the Black Hole," 22 pages. Ditto.

Issue 230—May 1981, 50¢, "Firefrost and the Ebon Seeker," 22 pages.



Ditto. Avengers appear.

Issue 231—June 1981, 50¢, "In All the Gathered Gloom." 22 pages. Moench/Gurland, Sienkiewicz, Sinnott/ Moore, Novak, Roussos.

Issue 232—July 1981, 50¢, "Back to the Basics," 22 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Byrne, (listed as Bjorn Heyn in this issue), Novak, G. Wein, Villain: Diablo.

Issue 233—August 1981, 50¢, "Mission for a Dead Man," 22 pages. Ditto. Villain: Hammerhead.

Issue 234—September 1981, 50¢, "The Man with the Power," 22 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Byrne, Jean Simek, Sharen. Ego appearance.

Issue 235—October 1981, 50¢, "Four Against Ego," 21 pages. Ditto.

Issue 236—November 1981, $1.00, "Terror in a Tiny Town," 40 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Byrne, Novak, G. Wein. Villain: Dr. Doom. Appearance by the Puppet Master. "The Challenge of Dr. Doom," 14 pages. Lee, Kirby, Stone/Ayers/Milgrom/Sinnott/Roussos/Sol Brodsky/Vince Colletta/ Giacoia/Marcos/Byrne, Novak, Roussos. Villain: Dr. Doom. Adapted from a cartoon adaptation of *FF* 5.

Issue 237—December 1981, 50¢, "The Eyes Have It," 20 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Byrne, Novak, G. Wein.

Issue 238—January 1982, 60¢, "The Lady Is for Burning," 13 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Byrne, Novak, Sharen. "The More Things Change," 8 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Austin, J. Rosen, Sharen. Thing's appearance changes to that in *FF*1. Frankie Raye becomes a human torch, joins the FF. Herbie the robot appears.

Issue 239—February 1982, 60¢, "Wendy's Friends," 22 pages. Byrne, Byrne, Byrne, Novak, G. Wein. Quicksilver appears.

Issue 240—March 1982, 60¢, "Exodus," 22 pages. Ditto. Quicksilver and the Inhumans appear. Crystal gives birth to a girl.

Issue 241—April 1982, 60¢, "Render Unto Caesar," 3 pages; "The Black Tower," 3 pages; "The Glory That Was," 3 pages; "Vini, Vidi, Vici," 5 pages; "Blood and Circuses," 4 pages; The Hollow Man," 4 pages. Ditto. Villain: Gaius Tiberius. Appearance by the Black Panther.

Annuals/King Size Specials

Annual 1—1963, 25¢, "Sub-Mariner Versus the Human Race," 37 pages. Lee, Kirby, Ayers, Simek. Appearances, in flashbacks, of Leonard McKenzie and Princess Fen, Namor's parents. Story takes place after FF 20. "The Fabulous Fantastic Four Meet Spider-Man," 6 pages. Lee, Kirby, Steve Ditko, Holloway. Reprinting of pages 1-13 of FF 1. 14 pages of pin-ups by Kirby.

Annual 2—1964, 25¢, "Origin of Dr. Doom," 12 pages. Lee, Kirby, Stone, S. Rosen. A Dr. Doom solo story, appearance by Ben Grimm, Reed Richards. "The Final Victory of Dr. Doom," 25 pages. Same creative team. Story takes place at the same time as *FF* 32. 6 pages of pin-ups by Kirby.

Annual 3—1965, 25¢, "Bedlam at the Baxter Building," 23 pages. Lee, Kirby, Colletta, Simek. Villain: Dr. Doom. Reed and Sue get married. Appearances by the Puppet Master, S.H.I.E.L.D., the Red Ghost and his Super-Apes, Mole Man, the Black Knight (villain), Kang, the Thinker, the Grey Gargoyle, the Super Skrull, Daredevil, Hydra, Cobra, the Executioner, the Enchantress, Mr. Hyde, Spider-Man, Electro, Unicorn, the Melter, the Beetle, the Eel, the Avengers, the Human Top, Attuma, the Watcher, Dr. Strange, the Mandarin, Lee, Kirby. Story takes place between *FF* 43, 44. Reprinting of *FF* 6, 23 pages. Reprinting of *FF* 11, 23 pages.

King-Size Special 4—November 1966, 25¢, "The Torch That Was," 19 pages. Lee, Kirby, Sinnott, S. Rosen. Appearance and origin of the original (1940's) Human Torch. Quasimodo, Wyatt Wingfoot appear. Villain: the Tinker. Story takes place between *FF* 56, 57. Reprinting of *FF* 25, 22 pages. Reprinting of *FF* 26, 23 pages.

King-Size Special 5—November 1967, 25¢, "Divide and Conquer," 30 pages. Lee, Kirby, Giacoia, S. Rosen. Inhumans, Black Panther appear. Villain: Psycho-Man. Sue's pregnancy announced. Takes place between *FF* 67, 68. Sinnott did not ink this story as listed in credits. "This Is a Plot?," 3 pages. Kirby, Kirby, Giacoia, L.P. Gregory. Lee, Kirby star in story. "The Peerless Power of the Silver Surfer," 12 pages. Surfer stars in story. Villain: Quasimodo. 10 pages of pin-ups.

King-Size Special 6—November 1968, 25¢, "Let There Be Life," 48 pages. Franklin Richards born. Crystal appears. Villain: Annihilus. Story takes place after *FF* 80.

King-Size Special 7—November 1968, 25¢, Reprinting of 12 pages. (pages 14-25) from *FF* 1. Reprinting of "The Origin of Dr. Doom," "The Final Victory of Dr. Doom," from *FF* Annual 2, 37 pages (total). 4 pages of Marvel Bullpen photos.

King-Size Special 8—December 1970, 25¢, Reprinting of "Sub-Mariner Versus the Human Race," from *FF* Annual 1, 37 pages. 14 pages of pin-ups.

King-Size Special 9—December 1971, 25¢, Reprintng of *FF* 43, 19 pages. Reprinting of Strange Tales 131, 12 pages. Torch/Thing story. Reprinting of "Bedlam at the Baxter Building," from *FF* Annual 3, 21 pages.

King-Size Special 10—1973, 35¢, Reprinting of "Bedlam at the Baxter Building," from *FF* Annual 3, 22 pages. Reprinting of "The Torch That Was," from *FF* Annual 4, 18 pages.

Annual 11—1976, 50¢, "And Then the Invaders," 19 pages; "Nine Against Destiny," 17 pages. Thomas, J. Buscema, Sam Grainger, J. Rosen, Rachelson. Villains: the Nazis. The Watcher appears. Story takes place after *FF* 170. Story continues in *Marvel Two-In-One* Annual 1 and *Marvel Two-In-One* 20.

Annual 12—1977, 60¢, "Hither Comes Crystal," 5 pages; "Hollywood, Here We Are," 11 pages; "Battle for the Great Refuge," 4 pages; "And Into Space," 2 pages; "Sphinx," 12 pages. Marv Wolfman, Bob Hall, Pollard, Bob Wiacek, Costanza, G. Wein. Inhumans, Quicksilver appear. Story takes place before *FF* 178.

Annual 13—1978, 60¢, "Nightlife," 9 pages; "Encounter," 7 pages; "Confrontation," 7 pages; "Pursuit," 5 pages. "Battle," 6 pages. Mantlo, S. Buscema, Sinnott, Watanabe, Mouly. Villain: Mole Man. Story takes place after *FF* 200.

Annual 14—1979, 75¢, "Cat's Paw," 35 pages. Marv Wolfman, Perez, Marcos, Novak, Gafford. Story takes place after *FF* 215. 6 pages of pin-ups by Pollard, Marcos.

Annual 15—1980, 75¢, "Time for the Prime Ten," 36 pages. Moench, Perez, Stone, D'Agostino, Esposito, Stone, D'Agostino, Esposito, Novak, Sean, Roussos. Captain Marvel appears. Villain: the Skrulls. "Power of the People," 12 pages. Moench, Sutton, Sutton, Novak, Sean. Dr. Doom solo story. Doom is regenerated.

Annual 16—1981, 75¢, "The Coming of Dragon Lord," 38 pages. Ed Hannigan, Ditko, Ditko, Ron Zalme, Hannigan. Dragon Man appears. Story takes place after *FF* 231.

Giant-Sizes

Giant-Size 1—May 1964, 35¢, "The Mind of the Monster," 9 pages; "Someone's Been Sleeping in My Head," 10 pages; "And in This Corner: the Incredible Hulk," 5 pages. Conway, Buckler, Sinnott, Simek, P. Goldberg. Thundra appears. Medusa is member. Sue does not appear. Story takes place after *FF* 146. 7 pages of pin-ups. This first issue is entitled *Giant-Size Super-Stars*; subsequent issues are called *Giant-Size Fantastic Four.*

Giant-Size 2—August 1974, 50¢, "Cataclysm," 6 pages; "George Washington Almost Slept Here," 7 pages; "The Great Grimmsby," 7 pages; "Time Enough for Death," 10 pages. Conway, J. Buscema, Stone, Stone, J. Rosen, S. Goldberg. Watcher appears. Medusa is member. Sue does not appear. Story takes place before *FF* 147. Reprinting of *FF* 13, 22 pages.

Giant-Size 3—November 1974, 50¢, "Where Lurks Death, Ride the Four Horsemen," 4 pages; "There Shall Come Pestilence," 9 pages; "And War Shall Take the Land," 7 pages; "And the Children Shall Hunger," 5 pages; "All in the Valley of Death," 5 pages. Conway, Marv Wolfman, Buckler, Sinnott, J. Rosen, S. Goldberg. Medusa is member. Sue does not appear. Story takes place between *FF* 154, 155. Reprinting of *FF* 21, 22 pages.

Giant-Size 4—February 1975, 50¢, "Madrox, the Multiple Man," 21 pages. Chris Claremont, J. Buscema, Stone, Stone, Sinnott, Costanza, G. Wein. Medusa is member. Sue does not appear. Story takes place before *FF* 155. Seven pages of pin-ups. Reprinting *FF* 28, 28 pages.

Giant-Size 5—May 1975, 50¢, Reprinting of *FF* 15, 20 pages. Reprinting of "Divide and Conquer," from *FF* King Size Special 5, 30 pages.

Giant-Size 6—October 1975, 50¢, Reprinting of "Let There Be Life" from *FF King Size Special* 6.

The Fantastic Four Roast Book (one-shot) May 1982, 75¢, "When Titans Chuckle," 32 pages. Fred G. Hembeck/Shooter, Hembeck/Wilson/Byrne/Mike Golden/John Romita, Jr./Al Milgrom/Mike Zeck/Alan Weiss/S. Buscema/Mike Vosburg/Kerry Gammill/Pollard/Frank Miller/Marshall Rogers/J. Buscema/Don Perlin/Gene Day/Walt Simonson/Dave Cockrum/Mooney/Dave Simons/Sienkiewicz/Brent Anderson, Stone/Austin/Golden/Sinnott/J. Rubenstein/Milgrom/John Beatty/Bob Layton/S. Buscema/Ricardo Villamonte/Dan Green/Pollard/Keith Janson/Perlin/Day/Simonson/Colletta/Sienkiewicz/Byrne/Bill Anderson/Carlos Garzon, G. Wein/Andy Yanchus, J. Rosen. Wraparound cover by Hembeck, Austin. Hembeck does both inside covers, one page a tribute to Lee, Kirby.

Cover Artists/Inkers

Kirby: 1-101, 164, 167, 171-177, 180, 181, 190, 200; Annuals 1-7, 9, 11, GS 5.
Sinnott: 5, 45-92, 95, 96, 98, 100, 101, 106, 107, 109, 110, 116, 117, 119, 121, 124-128, 130, 131, 133-135, 137, 138, 142-144, 147-149, 155-159, 161-163, 165, 167-173, 176, 178-186, 188, 191, 193, 197-211, 214, 217-225, 227, Annuals 4, 6, 12, 14, 15, GS 1, 3, 4, 6
Ayers: 1-3, 6-12, 15-17, 22, 28 Annual 1
Brodsky: 4
Roussos: 13, 18-21, 23-27
Ditko: 14, Annual 16
Stone: 29-39, Annuals 2, 3
Colletta: 40-44, Annual 9
Giacoia: 46, 50, 93, 94, 97, 99, 112, 113, 136, 139, 140, 145, 146, 154, 174, 192, Annuals 4, 5, 7, GS 5
Romita: 102-106, 114, 115, 129, 141, 152, 153, 178
Verpoorten: 102-105, 108, Annual 8
Marie Severin: 108, 111, 112, 114, 115, 120, 122, Annual 8, GS 2
J. Buscema: 107-121, 124-129, 133-138, 198, 202
S. Buscema: 123, 150, Annuals 8, 12
Steranko: 130-132
Marvel Bullpen: 132, 150, 160, GS 2
Buckler: 139, 140, 142, 144, 147-149, 151-159, 161-163, 166, 168, 169, GS 1, 3, 4, 6
Dan Adkins: 166
Larry Lieber: Annual 10
Gil Kane: 143, 145, 146, 150, 153, 154, 160, GS 2
Milgrom: 164, 175, 177, 179, 204, 216, 218, Annual 11
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Simonson: 212
Rubinstein: 215
Sienkiewicz: 219, 221-231
Byrne: 211, 213, 214, 220, 232-241
Austin: 232, 236, 238, 240, 241

Notes on creative personnel: L.P. Gregory and Gaspar Salandino (listed as Gasper in the checklist) are one and the same person; like wise Phil Rachelson and Phil Rache, George Bell and George Roussos, and Frank Ray and Frank Giacoia represents three, not six people.

Editors

Lee: 1-125, Annuals 1-10
Thomas: 126-181, Annual 11
L. Wein: 156, 157, 184-188, 191 GS 4
G. Conway: 179
Goodwin: 182, 183
Marv Wolfman: 190, 192-215, Annuals 12-14
Shooter: 196, Roast
Mark Gruenwald: 216, 217
Jim Salicrup: 218-241, Annual 15
David Anthony Kraft: Annual 16

The Fantastic Four Appearances in Other Titles

The FF have, collectively and individually, appeared in many comics, either as guest stars or in cameos. Listed below are only titles in which the group or a member have starred in.

Strange Tales: 101-134
Human Torch appearances: 101-134, Annual 2
Thing appearances: 101, 106, 116, 118, 123-134
Invisible Girl appearances: 101, 105, 106, 118
Mr. Fantastic appearances: 101, 106, 118, 127

Marvel Team-Up—Issue 1-3, Spider-Man/Human Torch; 6, Spider-Man/Thing; 10, Spider-Man/Human Torch; 17, Spider-Man/Mr. Fantastic; 18, Hulk/Human Torch; 23, Human Torch/Iceman; 26, Human Torch/Thor; 29, Human Torch/Iron Man; 32, Human Torch/Son of Satan; 39, 40, Spider-Man/Sons of the Tiger/Human Torch; 47, Spider-Man/Thing; 61, Spider-Man/Human Torch; 88, Spider-Man/Invisible Girl; 100, (first story) Spider-Man/FF.

Marvel Feature—11, Thing/Hulk; 12, Thing/Iron Man.

Marvel Two-in-One—*The Thing always appears. When more than one guest character or group is noted, the first one apears on the cover. Exception:* MTIO *51, on which all characters appear.* Issue 1, Man-Thing; 2, Sub-Mariner; 3, Daredevil; 4, Captain America; 5, Guardians of the Galaxy, Captain America; 6, Dr. Strange; 7, Valkyrie, Dr. Strange (second part in *Defenders* 20); 8, Ghost Rider; 9, Thor; 10, Black Widow; 11, Golem; 12, Iron Man; 13, Power Man; 14, Son of Satan; 15, Morbius; 16, Ka-Zar; 17, Spider-Man; 18, Scarecrow; 19, Tigra; 20, Liberty Legion (continued from *FF* Annual 11 and *MTIO* Annual 1(; 21, Doc Savage; 22-23, Thor; 24, Black Goliath; 25, Iron Fist; 26, Nick Fury; 27, Deathlok, FF; 28, Sub-Mariner; 29, Shang-Chi; 30, Spider-Woman; 31, Mystery Villain (Alicia), Spider-Woman; 32, Invisible Girl, Spider-Woman; 33, Modred the Mystic, Spider-Woman; 34, Nighthawk; 35, Skull the Slayer; 36, Mr. Fantastic, Skull the Slayer; 37, Matt Murdock (Daredevil); 38, Daredevil; 39, Vision, Daredevil; 40, Black Panther; 41, Brother Voodoo, Black Panther; 42, Captain America; 43, Man-Thing, Captain America; 44, Hercules; 45, Captain Marvel; 46, Hulk; 47, Yancy Street Gang; 48, Jack of Hearts; 49, Dr. Strange; 50, Thing; 51, Beast, Ms. Marvel, Nick Fury, Wonder Man; 52, Moon Knight; 53, Quasar, Wundarr; 54, Deathlok, Quasar, Wundarr; 55, Giant Man, Quasar, Wundarr; 56, Thundra, Giant Man, Quasar, Wundarr; 57, Wundarr, Giant Man, Quasar; 58, Aquarian (Wundarr), Giant Man, Thundra, Quasar; 59, Human Torch; 60, Impossible Man; 61, Starhawk, Moondragon, Her; 62, Moondragon, Starhawk, Her, Warlock; 63, Warlock, Moondragon, Her, Starhawk; 64, Stingray; 65, Triton, Stingray; 66, Scarlet Witch; 67, Hyperion; 68, Angel; 69, Guardians of the Galaxy; 70, Yancy Street Gang (?); 71, Mr. Fantastic; 72, Inhumans; 73, Quasar; 74, Puppet Master; 75, Avengers; 76, Iceman; 77, Man-Thing; 78, Wonder Man, 79, Blue Diamond, 80, Ghost Rider; 81, Sub-Mariner; 82, Captain America, Giant Man; 83, Sasquatch; 84, Alpha Flight; 85, Spider-Woman; 86, Sandman; Impossible Man (separate stories); Annual 1, Liberty Legion (continued from *FF* Annual 11; concluded in *MTIO* 20); 2, Spider-Man, Avengers, Captain Marvel, Warlock. First part in *Avengers* Annual 7; 3, Nova; 4, Black Bolt; 5, Hulk; 6, American Eagle.

What If—1, "What If Spider-Man Joined the Fantastic Four?" 6, "What If The Fantastic Four Had Different Powers?" 11, "What If the Original Marvel Bullpen Had Become the Fantstic Four?" 21, "What If the Invisible Girl of the Fantastic Four Married the Sub-Mariner?" 31, "What If There Was No Fantastic Four?".

Marvel Novel Series—5, "Doomsday" by Marv Wolfman, packaged and edited by Len Wein and Marv Wolfman. Cover by John Buscema and Peter Ledger. Published by Pocket Books $1.95.

Reprints

America's Best TV Comics 1 reprint *FF* 19.

Human Torch 1-8 reprints Strange Tales 101-108, plus reprint stories of the original Human Torch.

Marvel Collectors' Item Classics 1-22 reprints *FF* 2-4, 7-10, 13-18, 20-24, 27-30.

Marvel's Greatest Comics 23-96 reprints *FF* 12, 31-54, 56, 61-116.

Marvel Treasury Edition 2 reprints *FF* 6, 11, 48-50, plus a new John Buscema/Frank Giacoia pin-up.

Marvel Treasury Edition 11 reprints *FF* 4, 23, 51, 94.

Marvel Treasury Edition 21 reprints *FF* 120-123.

Marvel Triple Action 1-4 reprints *FF* 55, 57-60.

The Fantastic Four by Stan Lee, published by Pocket Books. Cover is reprint of *FF* 143 cover. Cover price $1.95. Reprints *FF* 1-6.

Plus the following Simon and Schuster trade paperbacks by Stan Lee ($6.95 unless otherwise noted).

Bring on the Bad Guys, cover by John Romita. Reprints *FF* 5 and "Origin of Dr. Doom" from *FF* Annual 2.

The Fantastic Four, cover by Bob Larkin. $3.95. Reprints *FF* 4, 48-50, 86.

Marvel's Greatest Superhero Battles, cover by John Romita. Reprints *FF* 25, 26.

Origin of Marvel Comics, cover by John Romita. Reprints *FF* 1, 55.

Superhero Women, cover by John Romita. Reprints *FF* 22.

All Simon and Schuster books listed have non-FF material as well, except *The Fantastic Four.* ■

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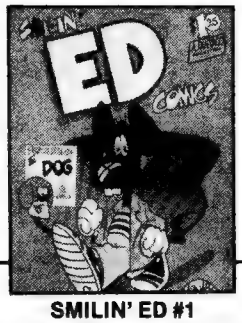

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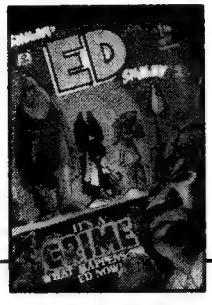

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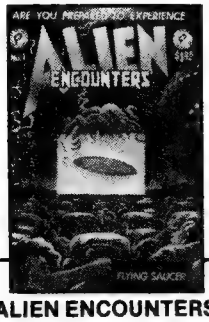

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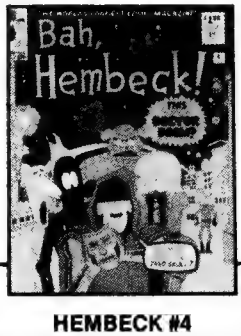

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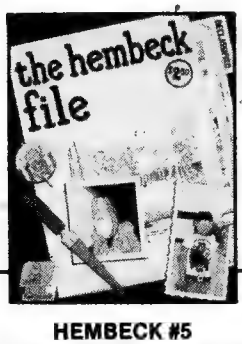

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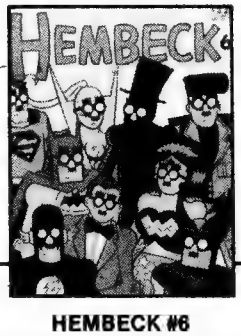

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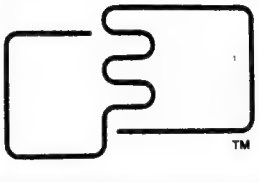

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OH, **REED**--**BEN!** STOP IT--PLEASE!

BEN! YOU'VE **GOT** TO LISTEN TO **REASON!**

REED RICHARDS HAS JUST DEVELOPED A SPECIAL FORMULA TO CHANGE **THE THING** BACK TO **BEN GRIMM--PERMANENTLY!**

...ONLY BASHFUL BENJY'S NOT TOO **FOND** OF THE IDEA!

FERGET IT MISTER! YA WANNA PLAY **MAD SCIENTIST**--FIND YERSELF **ANOTHER** GUINEA PIG! I'VE **HAD** IT!

...AND THAT'S ALL THE INTRO YOU'RE GONNA **GET!** THE **ACTION** STARTS--**NOW!**

LOOK OUT BEN! A FLAMING **METEOR** JUST BURST THRU THE **WALL!** AND THERE'S A **NOTE** ATTACHED!

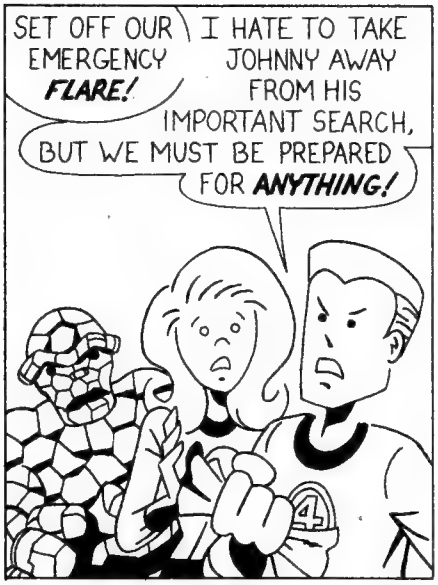
WHAT **IS** IT, REED? WHAT DOES IT **MEAN?**

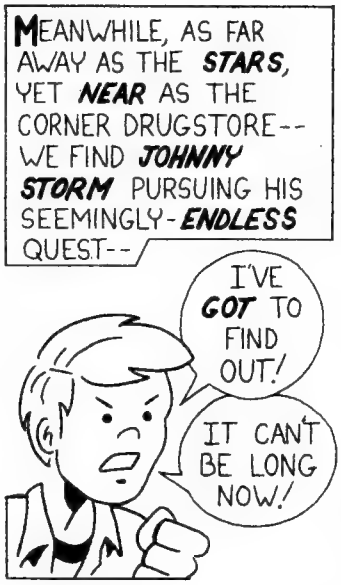
DEAR FF--

You're Dead

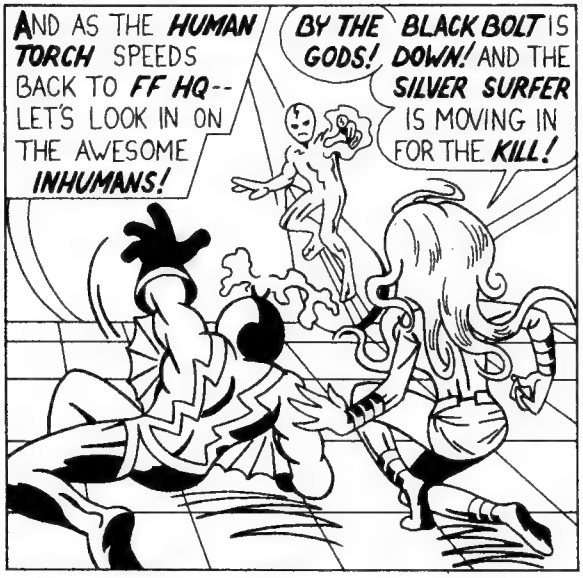
love, A friend

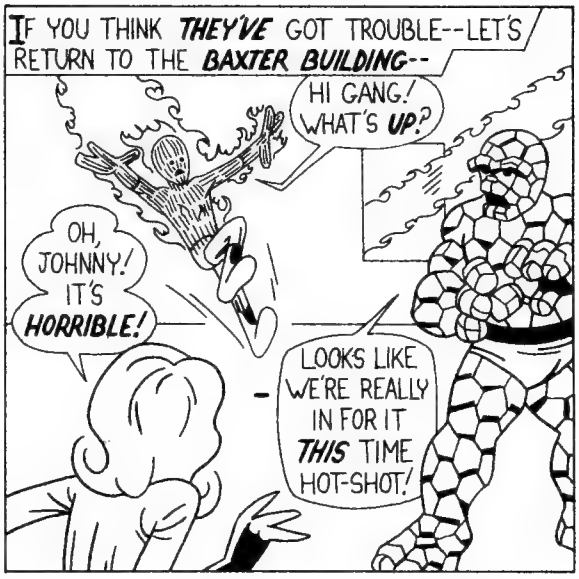
OBVIOUSLY, SUE, ONE OF OUR OLD FOES IS PLANNING **REVENGE** FOR A PREVIOUS DEFEAT!

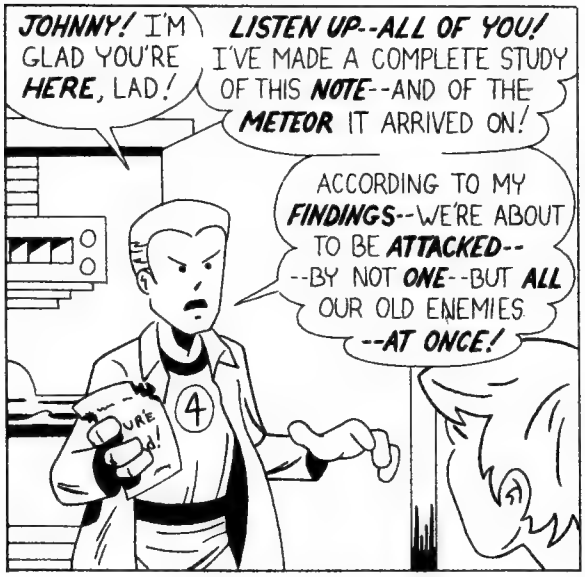

SET OFF OUR EMERGENCY FLARE!
I HATE TO TAKE JOHNNY AWAY FROM HIS IMPORTANT SEARCH, BUT WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING!

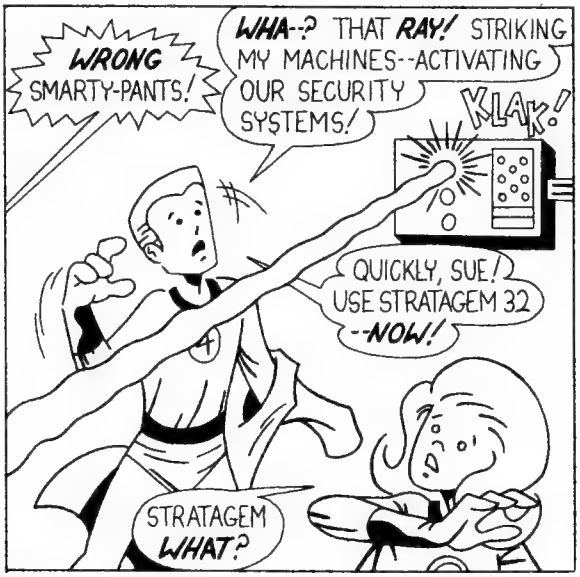

MEANWHILE, AS FAR AWAY AS THE STARS, YET NEAR AS THE CORNER DRUGSTORE--WE FIND JOHNNY STORM PURSUING HIS SEEMINGLY-ENDLESS QUEST--
I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!
IT CAN'T BE LONG NOW!

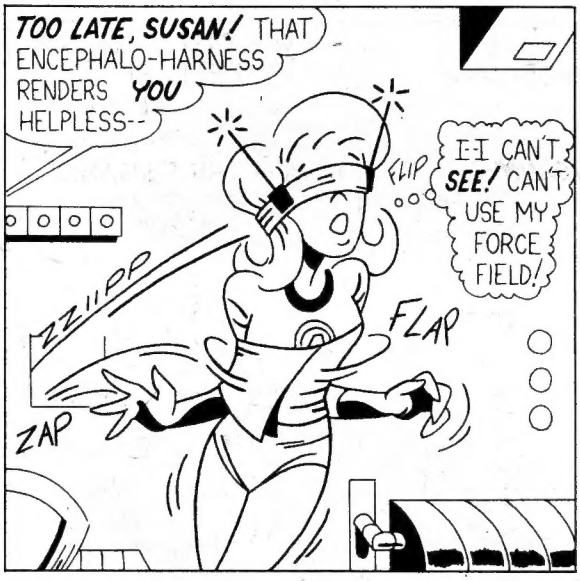
...OR MY TX-7 STING-RAY CONVERTIBLE SPORT-COUPE WILL NEVER HAVE A NEW MUFFLER--
WHA--? THE F-SIGNAL!
FLAME ON!

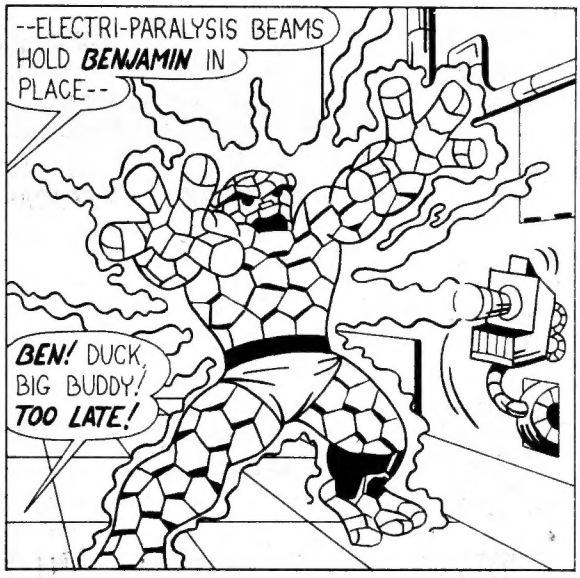

AND AS THE HUMAN TORCH SPEEDS BACK TO FF HQ--LET'S LOOK IN ON THE AWESOME INHUMANS!
BY THE GODS!
BLACK BOLT IS DOWN! AND THE SILVER SURFER IS MOVING IN FOR THE KILL!

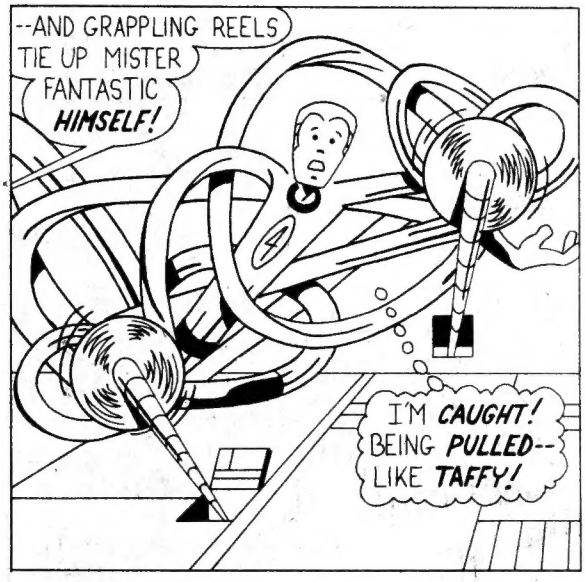

IF YOU THINK THEY'VE GOT TROUBLE--LET'S RETURN TO THE BAXTER BUILDING--
HI GANG! WHAT'S UP?
OH, JOHNNY! IT'S HORRIBLE!
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE REALLY IN FOR IT THIS TIME HOT-SHOT!


JOHNNY! I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, LAD!
LISTEN UP--ALL OF YOU! I'VE MADE A COMPLETE STUDY OF THIS NOTE--AND OF THE METEOR IT ARRIVED ON!
ACCORDING TO MY FINDINGS--WE'RE ABOUT TO BE ATTACKED--
--BY NOT ONE--BUT ALL OUR OLD ENEMIES
--AT ONCE!


WRONG SMARTY-PANTS!
WHA--? THAT RAY! STRIKING MY MACHINES--ACTIVATING OUR SECURITY SYSTEMS!
KLAK!
QUICKLY, SUE! USE STRATAGEM 32 --NOW!
STRATAGEM WHAT?







AUNT PETUNIA!
HEE HEE HEE

CHRONIC COMMENTS

Most of the comments on The X-Men Chronicles *were quite favorable:*

I enjoyed reading your new publication. Even though I've never seen an issue of the X-Men, your zine was really neat.

The best parts were Bill Anderson's inks and your Raoul Vezina's "If . . . What Then?" story.

L. Stephen Borer
St. Paul, MN

Stephen, you've never seen . . . ?! You ought to pick up a copy; it ain't half bad.

I recently picked up a copy of *The X-Men Chronicles* and found it to be throughly fascinating and refreshing. Being an X-Men fan, I was pleased to discover that something of this nature was being compiled. I particularly enjoyed the interview with Jim Shooter and "New Kids on the Block." I'm certain that from all X-Men fans, including myself, a heartfelt note of thanks.

Willie L. Peepers
Louisville, KY

I found it xciting, xtraordinary, and historic. It cleared up some voids for me in the current X-Men era (from issues 104-137).

Onward and upward. Excelsior!

Jeffery H. Geller
Hillsdale, NJ

The X-Men Chronicles was terrific. The cover by Dave Cockrum was very good. I liked the way your team covered the careers of the old/new X-Men.

It is ironic that Cyclops, who is the most combat trained, couldn't hold the team together while the non-powered Robin is doing a better job. It will be interesting to see if the X-Men will return to the original format. I will be interested to see closer ties between the X-Men and their families.

I want to thank you for a great issue.

Charles David Haskell
New York, NY

On the other hand . . .

While the articles in *The X-Men Chronicles* were enlightening, I found the artwork far below what I feel fans deserve.

The drawings by C. Ryan were so stiff that if he drew #1, the series might never gotten off the ground.

J.A. Fludd's back cover was atrocious. People, I would never have read the X-Men if Fludd drew them.

Anderson and Patterson's renditions were quite insulting both to the X-Men and to me.

Paul R. Wilson
Bergenfield, NJ

Paul, I hope the artwork in this issue was more to your liking. And for a comment of a more balanced nature:

The Cockrum cover was great. I honestly expected to see some polished sketch he whipped off for an eager fan at a convention, but instead was treated to a refined portrait. Great! I'm happy to see some true professionalism leak into the fan market instead of the too often seen opposite.

"1963" was an awkward article. The idea seemed to be a reflection on how the X-Men hit the eager market in that pivitol year. Unfortunately, due to the limit of the idea, the piece became little more than a characterization sketch of the original members. With the exception of the article on the much-underrated Werner Roth, Jay Gavin, this period was completely ignored. I realize that the current fervor is for "New X-Men, new X-Men!," but it would be nice if someone brought their forerunners into the limelight.

You may suspect that I loved "X-Men, Roth and Thomas." The issues done by Roth are some of my favorite reading ever because they not only introduced me to the group, but also due to sheer appeal of their slick look. They were subtle without being simple, as was Roth himself. Too many fans skimmed his work without a second thought, just as, I'm afraid, they may have done with this article.

Your own "X-Men Yet Not X-Men" was fun. I have never read anything dealing with the *Inferior Five*, so obviously knew nothing of the X-Men satire. Along with entertaining me with your well-written essay, you've sent me scurrying to the local dealers in search of Showcase 65! It better not be expensive!!

Hopefully, the informative "Jim Shooter Interview" will provide the readership with an alternative to the usual "I wanna be Jim's shooter" hate press he's been getting. I have a great deal of respect for the man and the ideas presented in this interview. Credit must be shared with Harry Broertjes for allowing Jim to show some of his creativity rather than bogging him down with "How could you let Byrne leave the X-Men?" type garbage. Good job.

"Ups and Downs With the Uncanny X-Men" is a prime example of what should have been done with "1963." Sandy Hausler shared the same easy journalistic style of Rik Mallory but chose to view a whole series (more or less) rather than a small component. It was simply enjoyable.

I felt "Wholesale Comic Investments" was way, way out of place. I would expect to see this type of article in *TBG* . . . on a bad week. I'm sorry, but I hate speculation for speculation's sake. The root to comic book collecting is the enjoyment of the product, not the bucks made from long or short term investment.

I'm confused about the Anderson centerspread—was it meant as a charicature of a portrait? If the latter, perhaps he'd best brush up on his anatomy. Wolverine isn't a midget and the Beast ain't a dwarf!

I have one question about Smilin' Ed strip. Why couldn't they have run this fine piece in lieu of the "What If the Phoenix Hadn't Died" abortion in *What If* 27?

"The New Kids On the Block" bit was real fine. I was happy to see such an intricate, creative character sketch of the two books by J.A. Fludd. I also applaud his thoughts on the terminal "which one's better" controversy. Let's all sit back and watch things develop, rather than line up on opposing sides and throw adjectives at one another.

The remaining two works, "Trufan Adventures" and "The X-Men Checklist" require nothing more than my sincere appreciation for the creative efforts (plus what must have been exhaustive research for Verti). And that's what I'd give, not just for these two pieces but for the *entire* effort. I really enjoyed this publication and look forward to both the *Fantastic Four Chronicles* and whatever lies down the path. Best of luck!

Tom A. Fields
Marlboro, VT

Showcase *65 was going for about $1.80 last I looked, Tom; hope the article did not drive up the price.*

I must disagree with your observations about the comic investment article. Like it or not (and I'm not crazy about it), buying new comics in quantity in order to make a quick profit is a reality, and The X-Men *is the title specualtors got behind in 1980. (One major financial magazine noted that the best investment for that year was not gold but* X-Men.)

Thanks for all the comments.

Roger Green

ERRATA
The X-Men Chronicles

The cover on *X-Men* 123 was done by Terry Austin without John Byrne.

All references to John Romita re: the new X-Men (GS 1, Annuals 3 up, regular issues 94 up) should read John Romita, Jr.

The appearance of the X-Men in Avengers Annual 10 was *not* a starring role, as the advertising had suggested.

Send all letters regarding this issue to "Chronic Comments," FantaCo Enterprises, Inc., 21 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210.

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